





THE
KING AND THE COUNTESS.

A ROMANCE.

What idle dream
Of long-past days hath melted me? It fades—
It vanishes—I am again a King!

TALFOURD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
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1849.

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THE KING AND THE COUNTESS.

CHAPTER I.

— Hark ! that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !
Arm ! arm !

CHILDE HAROLD.

EVENING was throwing her first shades over the castle of Mezieres, in the north of France, as a cavalier, evidently, from the restraint his presence imposed on the sentinel, an officer of distinction, appeared

on that part of the fortress called the platform of St. Lazarus. There was little in his plain military undress to attract attention ; but the eagle glance of his dark, piercing eye, the air of command that invested his forehead, and the resolution expressed in his looks, were unequivocal marks of a brave and experienced leader. His features were handsome, though weather-beaten, and presenting traces of recent privation. He was of the middle stature, possessing a slight but well-knit frame, which his movements showed to be long familiar with the exercise of arms. In a word, it was the Chevalier Bayard, the "*Sans Peur et Sans Reproche*" of French chivalry.

Screened from view by the parapet, he reconnoitred the surrounding country, occupied by the Imperial army, under the command of the Count of Nassau, who, as a

first step in the invasion of France, had laid siege to Mezieres. The once rich and fertile vicinity had been devastated at his approach, and was now torn up by parallels and trenches, protected by batteries, which kept up an almost uninterrupted cannonade on the beleaguered fortress. But though the garrison numbered only a thousand men, consisting chiefly of foreign mercenaries, reduced to the verge of famine, every attack had hitherto been fruitless.

For a time the enemy's batteries had suspended fire; but Bayard knew too surely that this was but a prelude to more vigorous operations, and his practised eye, sweeping the hostile trenches, discovered that new works were in progress, which, if skilfully directed, would render his defences untenable. A loud uproar within the castle interrupted his observations; and

immediately afterwards, a man-at-arms, serving as his orderly, stepped up to him.

The new-comer was young and agile, rather above the ordinary height, and clad in the steel suit of his grade. It required little discernment to perceive, from the *ensemble* of his frank and prepossessing countenance, that he was an Englishman ; and, in truth, was one of those soldiers of fortune, whom Francis the First, the reigning monarch of France, had drawn from almost every nation into his service.

“Word has come from the breach, Sir, that the two companies of Italians have passed through it, and gone over in a body to the enemy,” he said.

“It is what I expected,” replied Bayard, composedly, “and I am glad we are rid of them, though the rascals have cheated us of at least two days’ rations. But where is

the Count de Montmorenci? Does he know what has occurred?"

"He is mustering a troop of gendarmes to pursue them, Sir, and awaits your orders."

"They are not worth pursuit. But pass this way. I will go to the Count myself."

The Englishman accompanied him to a covered passage, leading to the interior; and threading a suite of apartments, occupied by the Chevalier, they reached a guard-chamber, which, however, was deserted, and a second glance showed that the guard were congregated in front of the doorway, opening on the ballium, or principal court.

Here the chief part of the garrison, including all not actually on duty, had assembled. A company of knights and men-at-arms, headed by a young officer in complete armour, and who was no other than the afterwards famous Montmorenci,

were in the saddle ; others were leading forth their horses, or preparing to mount ; and a crowd of arquebussiers, archers, and Swiss pikemen stood around, making no secret of the alarm too plainly expressed on their pale and wasted faces. Women, too, mingled with the throng, listening timidly to their murmurs, or inquiring in tremulous accents what had happened, while Montmorenci and other knights were endeavouring, by their bearing and persuasions, to restore confidence. Suddenly a whisper ran around of "the Chevalier! the Chevalier!" and all became hushed.

Stepping into the avenue which the soldiers opened for him, Bayard was advancing towards Montmorenci, when the murmurs which his appearance had for a moment silenced, again arose, and voices on every side urged him to surrender.

"If you do not yield, we will even leave you to hold out alone," cried a sturdy archer, insolently thrusting himself in the way.

"Knave!" exclaimed the Englishman, "do you dare to menace the general?"

Scarcely were the words spoken, when the archer was sprawling on the ground; and though he sprang up, scowling and muttering, yet, as the bystanders lent him no encouragement, he slunk into the rear. Every other eye was fixed on Bayard.

"Who talks of surrender?" he demanded. "That word is for cowards, not for the brave. You, Bartuise," he added to a stalwart Swiss, who was resting sullenly on a pike, "you, I am sure, would be the last to speak of it?"

Bartuise coloured.

"Well, I would, Chevalier," he replied,

“if we had full rations, but it is hard fighting on an empty stomach.”

“Aye, and under arms night and day,” cried a dozen voices.

“And does not the general share your hardships?” interposed Montmorenci. “Is not his fare the same as your own?”

“By’r lady, no, my Lord!” answered Bartuise, “for I believe the noble knight gives us the best of it. I have no complaint to make of him; but we mountaineers must have our trenchers full, or we cannot fight.”

“’Tis well spoken,” cried several hungry-looking Switzers.

“Not so well, my comrades,” said Bayard. “Do not underrate your countrymen, Bartuise; for they are as patient as they are intrepid. None can bear hardship better in a good cause; and could there be a nobler one than our’s?”

"Your worship knows what we have done," answered Bartuise; "but now we are famishing."

"So you were in the passes of the Pyrenees, when we poured into Navarre, and cut the Spanish army in pieces. *Ma foi!* you fought like lions, Bartuise! Wherever the fight was thickest, there appeared the Swiss pikemen, driving the enemy before them. Proud Switzerland! well may she boast of her sons! Happy France, to possess such allies! You remember the storming of Pampeluna?"

"I have reason, Chevalier," said Bartuise, touching a scar on his forehead. "I was falling, and another blow had been aimed at me, when your worship and the Constable Bourbon came up, and saved my life."

"Not us, but Nicolo there," cried Bayard, looking at a captain of archers. "We as

well as yourself were lost, had we not been seconded by the Genoese bowmen. When were they ever known to fail? When did their shafts miss the mark? Less than ever on that day, when France and Genoa became sisters. You then won laurels, Nicolo, which must not be tarnished now."

"But the desertion of two whole companies, Chevalier, makes the defence hopeless," said Nicolo hesitatingly.

"Rather it makes resistance more heroic. Dismount, dismount, gentlemen! We will not pursue the traitors, but thank them for going."

"Must we stay in these ruins, General, till they fall upon us?" asked a captain of Gascons.

"Or tamely wait till the enemy starves us to death?" said Nicolo. "What aid can this give France?"

“Every hour—every moment that we hold our post, is life and strength to her,” returned Bayard. “We give her time to prepare for action; and, be assured, she will not leave us to perish. Nor is it my intention that you should be passive while the enemy is so vigilant. If you only reflect calmly, you will find the desertion of the Italians is favourable to us rather than otherwise, for as we are now thought too weak for outer operations, the enemy will be off his guard, and we shall have better ground for a sortie. Be satisfied, then, Nicolo, and to-night’s work will prove I am dealing fairly with you. Or say, will you, who are so brave, and have fought with me so long, forsake your commander?”

A profound silence followed these words, and it seemed that the fate of the garrison hung on Nicolo’s decision.

“It shall never be said,” cried the archer, “that I broke faith with you, Chevalier. Do as you will ; while I can bend a bow you shall not lack an archer.”

“Nor a good pike while I can trail one,” exclaimed Bartuise. “We’ll all stand to that.”

“All,” shouted the Englishman. “We will stand or die with our general.”

A cheer broke from the bystanders, whom the example of their immediate leaders easily turned to habits of discipline. Their military ardour, too, was stimulated, by the difficulties already overcome, to continue the defence, and the more as it was reasonable to expect the speedy arrival of succours. Order and confidence were again restored ; and, on a word from Bayard, the soldiers withdrew to their barracks, leaving the principal officers in the ballium. These remained

for a short time conversing with their commander ; but, at length separated, and Bayard retired to his quarters attended by the Englishman.

CHAPTER II



CHAPTER II.

Impetuous, active, fierce, and young,
Upon the advancing foes he sprung ;
Woe to the wretch at whom is bent
His brandish'd faulchion's sheer descent.

ROKEBY.

MIDNIGHT had arrived, and a strong force again assembled in the castle ballium. Mustering without noise, each man, as the companies fell in, answered, in a low tone, to the roll-call, while knights and officers, lighted by flambeaux, moved down the ranks, ascertaining that every soldier was perfectly equipped. Bayard

himself inspected the line, and then, advancing to the centre, exhorted them to be firm and resolute.

“Remember,” he said, in conclusion, “our only object is to destroy the new batteries, and to attempt more might be fatal to us. Content yourselves, therefore, with protecting the pioneers in this duty, and do not be hurried into further conflict. Now, forward! and St. Denis be our help!”

The lights having been extinguished, the men-at-arms followed in silence after Bayard, and were succeeded by archers and pikemen, covering a corps of sappers and pioneers. In this order they issued from the sally-port, and approached the enemy's lines.

It was extremely dark, but Bayard led the way without difficulty; and, marching at a rapid pace, soon distinguished the batteries. His supposed weakness, as expected, had

rendered the Imperialists less vigilant, and he was not discovered till within a few paces. An alarm was then raised, and the arquebussiers and lanzknechts engaged on the works flew to arms; but, disregarding the volley poured upon them, the Swiss pikemen advanced, and endeavoured to mount the sand bags forming the batteries. Lanzknechts above, driving forward their long pikes, hurled them back, affording time to man the guns; and, attracted by the noise, overpowering reinforcements hastened from the camp to assist them. But they were intercepted by three brigades of men-at-arms, sent by Bayard to make a feint lower down the lines, while the Chevalier in person covered the real enterprise. Still a squadron of cavalry made its way to the spot, and at once compelled him to act on the defensive.

After a desperate attempt at assault, the Swiss were repulsed from the works, and fell back in disorder. In retiring, they were met by several lances, among whom was the English orderly, Esme Noel.

“Now, Bartuise,” cried the young soldier, “never give way. For the honour of England I will be first among them.”

He vaulted from his saddle, and without waiting to see who followed, rushed forwards. Bartuise turned after him, in company with the brave Swiss, and, at the same time, the Genoese archers, led by Nicolo, poured a cloud of shafts among the lanzknechts. Favoured by the confusion, Esme gained the summit of the battery, and threw himself on a gaunt German, whom he clove down, and thus opened a passage for the Swiss. His next object was to secure the guns, and seized with a sudden panic,

the artillery-men did not wait to be attacked, but jumped off the works, leaving the cannon undefended. All who could escape followed, while others threw down their arms, and in a few minutes the batteries were won.

Pioneers commenced the work of demolition, and Esme Noel again took to horse, calling around him a party of Swiss and Genoese, with whom he spurred towards Bayard, now just flanking the Imperialists. Esme's accession completed their discomfiture, and they took flight, hotly pursued by the French, who, forgetting their leader's injunction, were soon scattered over the field. The Englishman was among the foremost, pressing close on the fugitives, and did not rein up till he found himself alone.

The faint notes of a bugle sounding the recall, at such a distance as to be almost

inaudible, awakened him to a sense of danger ; and rounding a small thicket, he galloped off in what seemed to be the direction of the castle. It was soon apparent, from the challenge of a sentinel, that this was not the case ; and he was retracing his steps, when a file of troopers started out of an adjacent hollow, and demanded the password. His reply was a blow, which unhorsed their leader ; and he got past them ; but recovering from the surprise, they gave chase. At this crisis a body of pikemen, headed by Bartuise, wheeled round the thicket, and perceiving, from the shirt over his armour,—a means of recognition always adopted in a night assault,—that Esme was one of their comrades, hastened up to him. Afraid of being surrounded, the pursuing horse turned to retreat ; but would still have been cut off, if the victors had not

been called away by another troop, which suddenly appeared in the rear.

The new comers consisted of about twenty horsemen, escorting a litter, attended by several pages, bearing flambeaux. On approaching the hollow, where the combatants were first seen, they seemed confounded, and half inclined to fall back ; but observing that Esme and Bartuise drew off, obviously from fear of attack, their leader became more confident.

“ French stragglers, I see,” he cried. “ They have been making a sortie, and those craven lancers are Imperialists. Now, Jacopo, stand by me, and we will show the Lady Corinna a passage of arms. One blow for the Emperor ! ”

“ A Strozzi ! a Strozzi ! ” cried Jacopo ; and the words were echoed by those behind.

About a dozen well-armed horsemen, clad

in steel hauberks, were just on the spur, but were arrested by a grave-looking ecclesiastic, mounted on a mule, who exhorted them to forbear.

“What would you do, Count?” he continued. “Those fugitives will not molest us; and any interference with them will infringe our safe-conduct.”

“We will make but one charge, in honour of the Lady Corinna, good father,” replied the Count. “Ho, there! a Strozzi!”

Esme and Bartuise awaited his onset behind a trench, which in the darkness was not perceived by the assailants, and galloping furiously down the declivity, their horses stumbled into it. Here the long pikes of the Swiss had the advantage over them, while Strozzi himself was encountered by Esme, who, after a brief struggle, hurled him from his horse, and he was left for

dead. Five or six others were soon stretched beside him, and the remainder galloped off, pursued by the Swiss, in spite of Esme's remonstrances.

These incidents barely occupied an instant; and the party left with the litter, having no time for flight, were surrounded by the Swiss before they were aware of danger. Attracted by a cry, Esme forced his way to the vehicle, in front of which he found a female domestic and the priest; while the carriage was occupied by a young lady, as terrified as her retinue, and whom a torch held by a rude Swiss showed to be extremely beautiful.

"I claim your protection, Sir, if you are for the King of France," she cried to Esme. "I am the Lady Mirandola, and have his highness's safe conduct."

"By protecting us, my son, you will

render the King a service," said the clergyman.

"Whether or not, father, it is always my duty to aid ladies and priests," replied Esme. "But I am unable to do it now, unless you will go with me to Mezieres."

"Do you take us as prisoners?" asked the lady. "Believe me, we were no parties to the affront you have received."

"Of that I am certain, Madam ; and, if you accompany me, I pledge myself that your safe-conduct shall be respected."

"Then we confide ourselves to your protection, Sir," said the lady.

She was about to add a question as to the fate of Count Strozzi, but, as every moment endangered their safety, Esme turned to give directions for retreat ; and, forming in order, the Swiss escorted the litter down a rugged road towards the castle. To avoid

the enemy's scouring parties, they made a détour; but after an interval of about an hour, arrived safe at their destination.

CHAPTER III.

The bloom of opening flowers, unsullied beauty,
Softness, and sweetest innocence she wears,
And looks like nature in the world's first spring.

ROWE.

MORNING streamed through deep embrasures into an upper chamber of the castle, occupied by the Lady Mirandola and her favourite attendant.

Corinna Mirandola had seen, perhaps, some eighteen summers, and possessed all the happy presage and vernal freshness of that season of promise, when the harvest seems golden, and waiting to be garnered ;

but too often is reaped in sorrow, and yields only briers. The warm olive of her Italian complexion,

“ Fresher than the morning rose,”

was mingled on her cheek with the rare bloom usually confined to Spanish beauties, and which even Murillo's Promethean brush has failed to delineate. But, though beaming with animation, her face revealed no trace of the fervid and passionate nature, generally associated with that glowing tint; but, on the contrary, wore an expression of tranquillity and tenderness, harmonizing admirably with full, dark, thoughtful eyes, which, from the depth and softness of their lustre, seemed to give light to others as well as herself. Long black hair, confined in front to a few curls on her temples, fell in graceful clusters over her neck, the clearness of which, heightened by contrast,

was perfectly dazzling. Her form was faultless, and presented in every line a new combination of grace and motion.

The attendant was a pretty Florentine, with arch black eyes, and a good-natured, though somewhat pert look, evidently originating in the lady's favour. She was attired in the simple dress of her class, but every point of decoration was pushed to the utmost limit, and it could be seen by the most superficial observer, that Minna Ronaldi entertained a proper estimate of her own importance.

They had been called to France by a casualty not uncommon at the time. The Count of Mirandola, Corinna's father, had been taken prisoner by the French, while fighting on the side of the Emperor, in Navarre; and, being unable to furnish immediately the enormous sum demanded for

ransom, it was arranged that his only child should be left as hostage with the Duchess d'Angoulême, mother of the King, till it was paid, and that on her arrival in France, he should be set at liberty. For this purpose, Corinna was making all haste to the French court, when her progress was arrested in the manner shown.

"I protest, my Lady, this is worse than being cooped up in Mirandola," remarked Minna, after regarding her mistress for some time in silence. "We set out to see the world, and find ourselves immured in a gloomy chamber, which may be haunted, for aught we know!"

"Hush, Minna!" said the indulgent mistress, though with a half-smile. "I am in too serious a mood to think of terrors so idle."

"That's the very thing, my Lady. You

are too serious, and I am no less so. If we were only in merry sort, I should be content, and wait for what fortune would bring us. But I knew something would come of travelling in the dark; and marvel, after what took place, that we did not get killed outright."

"Then, you should be the more grateful that we are in safety. The poor Count has probably paid a fatal penalty for his rashness, or he would not have left us unprotected. Alas! I have indeed been a sufferer from this war, which first has made my father a prisoner, then given our territories to the keeping of the Emperor, and now deprives me of my good cousin."

"Truly, it is all as sad as it can be, my Lady," returned Minna, "excepting only the matter of the Count—good gentleman! who would never die so quietly.—Do not sup-

pose for a moment that he has been slain. I warrant you, he is now safe in the Emperor's camp, as merry as the best."

"Do you really think so, Minna?"

"I am sure of it, my Lady. You know, he is not one to grieve, but as gay a roysterer as ever breathed, come what will of it. No! it is only our tender sex that mope and pine, my Lady. Men are all as mad as butterflies, with a little spice of the wasp in them; and I must say of the noble Count—albeit he is your Ladyship's kinsman—that he is as much wasp as butterfly."

"I forgot, he is no favourite of your's."

"Well, well! he has brought your Ladyship into a nice net; and only for that dear, handsome Englishman, I do believe that we should all have been murdered. What vexes me is, that we should be brought here

as common prisoners, instead of going first to the Emperor's camp, and having all the good knights and gallants pay their court to us. Then the fine ceremonies that we have lost—as a herald coming with sound of trumpet, to give your Ladyship up to the French; and troops of peers and dames riding forth to receive you. It almost breaks my heart, and I shall hardly ever recover from it, even supposing that we get out of the castle alive. As for that, we not only run the chance of being shot, but are just as likely to die of hunger.”

“So far, at least, we have no reason to fear such a catastrophe,” observed Corinna, when the voluble soubrette was obliged to pause for breath; “both last night and this morning, everything was provided for us that we could desire.”

“Ah! my Lady, you do not know that

the wine we drank was from the last bottle in the castle; and, they say, the good Chevalier who sent it scarcely touched food the whole day himself."

"Oh! do not tell me that, Minna, or I shall grieve that I tasted it. Noble, generous knight! can it be that he is reduced to this? Oh! I will not trespass on his little store! If the good Padre can only arrange for our departure, we will set forth without further delay. But here he is."

As she spoke, the old priest entered.

"I have seen the Chevalier, daughter," he said, "and told him all. He wishes to communicate something to you himself; and is now in the ante-chamber, awaiting your permission to enter."

"Pray introduce him, father; I wish to express my thanks for the consideration he has shown us."

"We are even more indebted to him than you imagine," returned the Padre, leading in Bayard.

"Not to me, but your own good fortune, father," said the Chevalier. "I wish, Madam, that it was in my power to oblige you ; but I can only offer you sympathy and advice."

"Oh! Sir, I do not need to be told how kind you have been to us," cried Corinna, with eyes full of tears. "I know, too, how very painfully you are situated, and that your embarrassments are increased by our presence. This makes me anxious to ascertain whether we are at liberty to depart, as in that case, we will at once relieve you of further trouble."

"You are perfectly free, Madam, as far as refers to your stay here," replied Bayard; "but I am sorry to add that

you will incur great peril in leaving the castle."

"Will not the King's safe-conduct protect us, then?" asked Corinna, anxiously.

"It will be respected by his own subjects, but your danger arises from his enemies."

"Not from the Emperor, surely? He is my father's ally."

"You shall judge yourself, Madam, what reliance can be placed upon him. But first let me ask why, in making for Paris, you deviated so far from the usual route as to approach the Imperial camp, instead of entering France by way of Nancy?"

"We were proceeding to Nancy, when my kinsman, Count Strozzi, who is serving with the army, met us, and from him we learnt that it was necessary to repair to the camp, in order to be given up formally to you by the Count of Nassau."

“These were his very words,” interposed the Padre. “Now listen to his perfidy.”

“A letter found in his valise,” said Bayard, “which was picked up by one of your captors, discloses it all. Orders had been issued by the Emperor, that on your arrival in the camp, you were to be espoused to Count Strozzi,—if necessary, by force ; and then conveyed to Spain.”

“What an abyss have I escaped!” exclaimed Corinna, clasping her hands in terror.

“You now understand what risk you would incur in leaving the castle,” said Bayard.

“Oh ! yes, yes ! Suffer me to remain, Sir, I beseech you. I will not complain of privation, and can live on the coarsest fare. Only do not give me up ; anything would be preferable to that.”

“Assure yourself of my best service, Madam ; and that no pains shall be spared to secure your safety. I have given the matter much consideration, and come prepared to advise you what course to pursue.”

“You are most kind. Whatever your counsel may be, I shall abide by it.”

“Then I must frankly avow, that I cannot afford you security here. We are reduced to the verge of famine, and the first vigorous attack may oblige us to capitulate, when you would fall into the power of the Imperial General.”

“Alas !”

“Nay, I hope such an event may never happen. An officer possessing my confidence—in fact, the one who brought you here, sets out to-night for Rheims ; and I propose that you and your chaplain, with one female attendant, shall accompany him.

To take more might endanger your safety ; and, at best, the undertaking will be hazardous, till you are quite clear of the enemy's lines. But I have great reliance on the courage and address of your conductor, and trust you will escape."

"You give me new hope, Sir," faltered Corinna. "I will act as you may decide, assured that I could not possess a wiser or nobler protector than the Chevalier Bayard."

"You overrate my attention, fair Lady, though not my desire to aid you. To-night, then, at ten o'clock, you will be ready for your journey."

"It was so agreed, and Bayard quitted the room, leaving the party to make their preparations.

CHAPTER IV.

Now I will unclasp a secret book,
And to your quick-conceiving discontents
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous,
As full of peril and advent'rous spirit
As to o'erwalk a current, roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

SHAKSPEARE.

BAYARD might well designate a journey from Mezières to Rheims a very perilous enterprise. Inclosed in lines of circumvallation, guarded by a wary and vigilant enemy, the besieged fortress was completely isolated; and even when these barriers were

passed, other and greater difficulties presented themselves. Entire villages had been reduced to ashes ; roads torn up and rendered impassable ; vineyards devastated, and every trace of vegetation destroyed. The ways, too, were beset with infuriated peasants, who, maddened at the destruction of their property, bore as much animosity against the King's forces as against the invaders, and lost no opportunity of retaliating.

Esme Noel was duly made acquainted with the task proposed for him, and immediately repaired to his quarters, a small bare-looking room in one of the towers, to announce it to his foster-brother and henchman, Barnaby Tindal, a burly young fellow, attired in a somewhat worn suit of buff.

He found Barnaby engaged in cutting the air with two fore-fingers, in lieu of a knife

and fork, then in general use, and thrusting into his mouth large helps of supposed dainties, which he devoured with seeming avidity.

"Soh! at your old fancies!" cried Esme. "Will you never have done with this?"

"Pr'ythee, master mine, let me finish my supper," cried Barnaby, whose mouth was so full of imaginary viands that he could scarcely articulate. "This venison-pasty, I assure you, is excellent of the kind, though I might prefer it a spice homelier, and more solid for my own eating. But, as I see you are urgent, I will not detain your worship. Here's to your health, in as good Burgundy as can be had in the castle." And raising his fist to his mouth, he went through the performance of imbibing a deep draught, smacking his lips at the conclusion.

"Now, I hope your insatiable appetite is appeased," said Esme, laughing.

"Pretty well; though, to say the truth, I am growing weary of these fine French dishes, and would rather have one cut of good English beef than a dozen of them. As for the wine, I would give it all for a draught of beer."

"My poor fellow, you are famishing."

"Psha! I do well enough. You know I must grumble, just to keep up my spirits. But is there no news stirring, good master? Last night's sport to be repeated to-night, I suppose?—another running fight."

"Not by me, at least, as I am ordered on another duty. I set out for Rheims at ten o'clock."

"This is a jest?"

"I was never more serious in my life."

"Stop a minute, then," cried Barnaby, snatching up his cap. "Now, both together—hip, hip, hurrah!"

“Are you so glad to part with me?” asked Esme.

“Part with you, Master Esme! What put that in your head?”

“I am to leave you behind.”

“Now you are jesting. You might as well leave your casque behind, or your corslet; for, as far as I can judge, your henchman is quite as necessary. What! leave me in this battered, tottering, shaking, ruinous old castle, to be starved, or killed, just as it may happen?”

“It must be so. My orders are imperative; and, you know, I dare not infringe them. So go thy ways, and see my horse well groomed, for he has hard work before him.”

However much disappointed, Barnaby had everything ready at the appointed time; and mounting, Esme repaired to an obscure

postern, on the further side of the fortress. Here he was found by Bayard, who brought up Corinna Mirandola, attended by Padre Stephano and Minna. As they passed one by one through the narrow outlet, Bayard gave his final injunctions to Esme.

“Remember, we are at the last push,” he concluded. “When you have seen the King, tell this to the Duke de Bourbon; and say from me, that if succours do not arrive within a week, I fear all will be over. Now, farewell!”

Esme eagerly pressed his proffered hand; and the Chevalier returned through the postern, securing it within.

It was intensely dark; black heavy clouds drooped overhead, as if ready to fall; and the wind broke on the ear in low, mournful gusts. Though naturally courageous, Corinna could not repress a thrill of appre-

hension on looking around ; but it subsided, when, moving forward, Esme placed himself at her side, leaving the Padre and Minna to come behind. They proceeded in silence, but wherever the rugged way became more difficult, the lady felt his hand on her bridle, holding up the horse, while he warned their companions of the unseen obstacles, and by his alertness and composure dispelled their fears.

His first aim was to get clear of the lines of circumvallation, and, to effect this, he proceeded towards a remote part of the works, on the side fronting Flanders, which, as no hostile demonstration could be expected in that quarter, was likely to be weakly guarded. So it proved ; and passing unnoticed through the chain of sentinels, they made a circuit round the outposts, and thus regained, at last, their proper route.

The distant watch-fires were still discernible, when heavy drops of rain began to fall, inducing the travellers, though no longer apprehensive of interruption, to continue their speed, in the hope of reaching a place of refuge before the storm, evidently impending, should break forth. Soon afterwards, a loud clap of thunder forced a tremulous exclamation from Corinna.

“Do not be alarmed, Madam,” said Esme. “The tempest will probably be of short duration; and there is a ruin close by, where you can take shelter.”

Breasting a small eminence, they distinguished the dark outlines of a broken wall and tower, all that remained of a village church, destroyed on the approach of the invaders. For an instant a torch seemed to gleam in the dismantled belfry; but Esme concluded it was lightning, as fearful flashes

now rent the sky ; and therefore he did not hesitate to lead Corinna's horse across a small burial-ground to the ruin, followed by the Padre and Minna.

“ Holy refuge ! I thank our Lady that thou art open to us,” exclaimed the priest, entering the transept, the only part of the fabric not perfectly roofless.

“ Amen,” responded Minna ; “ though, certes, I could have wished our lodging somewhat more comfortable. Mercy on us ! the thunder is loud enough to wake the dead.”

“ Hush ! hush !” cried the Padre, in alarm. “ Do not speak irreverently of the dead, who lie so close to us. Sancta Maria ! *ora pro nobis, peccatoribus !*”

“ You frighten me, good Sir,” said Minna, unable even now to repress her disposition for mischief. “ I hope there is

no fear of our being troubled with apparitions."

"Peace, Minna," said Corinna; "this is no moment for levity."

"She shall be convinced of that to-morrow," observed the Padre, who was very sensitive on the subject of ghosts; "and, to impress it on her memory, perform at the same time a heavy penance."

Here they were joined by Esme, who had been securing the horses; and nothing further was said. Each became occupied in watching the storm, now raging with great violence, and they with difficulty kept clear of the rain, driven in upon them by furious gusts, from the uncovered nave, which was ever and anon illuminated by the lightning. During one of these outbursts, Esme, looking suddenly round, descried a dark object through the window, but it vanished so

quickly, that it was impossible to distinguish what it was.

"Has anything happened, my son?" asked the Padre, alarmed by his hasty movement.

"It seems some one is watching us," answered Esme. "Remain quiet, and I will take a look round."

"Oh, do not leave us, Sir, I entreat you," murmured Corinna.

But Esme had already darted into the churchyard. Gliding noiselessly round the tower, a footfall drew his attention to a low parapet, and looking over it, he discovered a figure below, descending a flight of steps, which led to the Catacombs. It passed through the open door, closely attended by Esme, who entered the vault unperceived.

The glimmer of a lantern on one side revealed three men, now joined by the scout,

but Esme stepped behind an abutment, where he could watch them unseen.

“ We’ve nothing to fear,” said the scout.
“ There’s only four of them ; and two are women, and one a priest.”

“ Two women !” cried another, exultingly.
“ This is well ! Ha ! ha ! You know how the soldiers served my Annette ?—my poor child !”

“ And my good wife, when they burnt the cottage over our heads ?” said a third.
“ Now I’ll have revenge.”

“ Ay, if they are gentlefolks,” said the fourth. “ Curses on all gentlefolk !”

“ These can be nothing else,” said the scout ; “ for they are guarded by a man in armour—either a knight or partisan, I know not which. But come on, we lose time talking.”

Esme suffered them to pass without dis-

covering himself, resolving to keep close on their steps, and fall on them by surprise. But, on quitting the vault, they locked the door, and left him prisoner.

Confident in their numbers, they proceeded straight to the transept, uttering threats and imprecations.

“No resistance, or you are all dead!” exclaimed the foremost.

A cry of terror burst from Corinna.

“My sons, what seek you?” demanded the Padre, planting himself before her.

“Oh! help! help!” screamed Minna.
“Where is the Cavalier?”

“Shout! shriek!” laughed one of the peasants, as he seized her. “It’s our turn now.”

“The mistress for me!” cried another, rushing at Corinna.

“Mercy!” exclaimed the terrified lady,

eluding his grasp. "Oh! for the love of Heaven, spare me!"

"Leave us, villains!" cried the Padre, "or I will lay my curse upon you, and all you possess."

"Keep your curse, and give us your purse;" answered one, grasping him by the throat.

"Ha! ha! out with it, shaveling!" said another, "or tell your beads quick; for you shall have short time for prayers."

"Now you are mine," shouted the captor of Corinna, "or my dagger shall settle you."

But she broke from him, leaving hood and mantle in his hand, and with her long hair streaming on the wind, darted towards the porch. Here she was met by Esme, who had escaped from the vault, by climbing out of an aperture, and now threw himself on

her assailant. One blow stretched him bleeding on the ground.

“Ha! here is the butcher,” cried one of his comrades. “Jean! Jacques! see!”

Esme rushed upon him, though Jean and Jacques hastened to his succour, assailing him in a body. But their number was no match for the Englishman’s skill; and he soon disabled one, who instantly fled, and the others rushed after him.

“Do not pursue them, my son,” cried the Padre, holding Esme back. “They will not return; and now the rain has ceased, we can go on our way.”

“Pray let us do so, Sir,” exclaimed Corinna, still trembling. “You have preserved our lives, and we must rely on you, under Heaven, to place us in safety.”

“Be assured, Lady, there is nothing I

have nearer at heart. I trust you received no harm from the ruffians?"

"None whatever, thanks to your protection."

"I shall never forgive myself for being absent; but it was desirable to ascertain what enemies we had to contend with, and the villains had time to get here before me. But we will now set forward again."

"Beshrew the cowardly knaves!" cried Minna, as he led out the horses, "though in truth his worship made short work with them. I thought one was killed, but he got up, and made his escape."

Their steeds were now ready, and mounting, they resumed their journey.

CHAPTER V.

How terrible is passion ! how our reason
Falls down before it ! whilst the tortur'd frame,
Like a ship dash'd by fierce encountring tides,
And of her pilot spoil'd, drives round and round,
The sport of wind and wave.

VIRGIN QUEEN.

IN the ancient palace of Rheims was a spacious chamber, called, from the colour of its hangings, the blue cabinet, in which Louise of Savoy, Duchess d'Angoulême, was one day conversing with her gifted and accomplished son, Francis the First.

Though verging on that dreaded crisis in woman's existence, when the age becomes a profound secret, Louise was still beautiful ; and the accurate outline and lofty expression of her features, aided, perhaps, by the reviving powers of art, concealed the ravages time had made in her complexion. Married almost in childhood, she had passed the period of coverture in a distant province, fulfilling the duties of a wife in an exemplary manner, though not altogether escaping the tongue of slander. A parent at sixteen, and in another year a widow, she was suddenly called upon to sustain a part in the widest sphere of human action, among the most brilliant characters of the day ; and though traces appeared, at intervals, of deep and headstrong passions, which her vigorous understanding could not always restrain, the task had been ably fulfilled.

It cannot be denied, however, that her rare talents were often exercised for sinister and unworthy ends, as well as marred by a ridiculous credulity ; and the great princess, whose genius astonished contemporaries, and excites the admiration of posterity, was a dabbler in the insane juggleries of the black art, entertaining Cornelius Agrippa, the famous magician, as one of the principal officers of her household.

Francis, attired in a suit of crimson velvet, sprinkled with pearls, and holding in his hand a cap of the same material, in front of which was a gold medal, looping an ostrich plume, looked what he was justly pronounced—the first gentleman of the age. Tall and well proportioned, his person presented a union of strength and grace seldom met with. His fine, manly countenance, too, had generally a more engaging

expression than that of Louise, though it frequently varied, yielding to the slightest contraction of his lofty brow, and becoming in a moment gloomy and stern. The same inconstancy marked his disposition. An inordinate desire to excel made him jealous of eminent merit in others; and his character was a singular compound of meanness and magnanimity. Although possessing in a remarkable degree every attribute for government, his administration had been singularly unsuccessful; and by the continual pursuit of military glory, entailing a prodigal expenditure, had in a few years reduced his kingdom from the highest prosperity to the brink of ruin. Still, nobler objects were not overlooked, or other interests forgotten. A scholar and virtuoso, he was a munificent patron of learning and the arts, the revival of which, arising mainly

from the dispersion over Europe of the polished Greeks, which followed the fall of Constantinople, and the impetus derived from "Leo's golden age," was fostered and confirmed by his bounty. His nature, indeed, was itself generous, but abused by favourites, and prone to duplicity, often prompting him to lavish favours, and even terms of endearment, on persons he detested, and had secretly resolved to destroy. In short, he was at once princely and vindictive, frank and insincere.

"So you have yet a weighty matter to speak of, Madam," he said. "Is it pressing, or may we safely leave it for another conference?"

"On the contrary," answered Louise with some agitation, "it cannot be settled too soon. I have deferred it from day to day, wanting courage to speak to you on such

a subject ; but my feelings will no longer be silent. I must make them known to you without further delay."

"This preface surprises me, Madam. Have I ever opposed you in anything, that you scrupled to acquaint me with your wishes before ?"

"Oh, no! You have always been most affectionate, and treated me with more consideration than I either expected or desired. It is not that, but — alas ! I cannot even now disclose it."

"In truth, you alarm me. The affair must be serious to cause you so much agitation ; and, therefore, I must be told what it is. Compose yourself, then ; and, be assured, I will do all that is possible to assist you."

"Would, that it may prove so!" exclaimed Louise ; "but I fear that, swayed

by your own prepossessions, you will be the chief opponent of my purpose."

She paused, apparently to collect herself, and, averting her head, added, "Listen then, my son, to a confession which woman never makes without emotion, in my case every way more painful. The word which dyes my cheek with shame—which my voice almost refuses to utter, embraces all that I hope, all that I live for. It is like the last throw of the gambler, which is to give fortune, or reduce to beggary. Francis, I love!"

"Madam!"

"Yes, yes! it is the truth,—the long-hidden, long-cherished truth, which has lain for years in my heart, treasured like its life-blood. I have told you my secret, and will not recall the word. I do indeed love."

"And may I ask who is the happy

object of your affection, Madam?" asked Francis, sarcastically.

"You shall know, Sir," said Louise, with offended dignity, though a tear gathered in her eye; "not that I expect any advantage from a confidence already honoured with your derision, but because I will justify my own heart."

"Pardon me, my mother, if I seem severe. You forget that your revelation is unexpected—even startling. Is it unreasonable, then, that I should desire to know who is the fortunate possessor of your heart? What must be my apprehensions—in what low position must I look for him—when you say that your passion has existed so long, and yet been so carefully concealed?"

"So long! Yes, the time has seemed endless. He was a stripling—I, a bride, wedded to one I had never seen! It was

nothing new. Love is not required at the espousals of princes, but power ; and none cared, when they saw me, whether the diamonds on my bosom covered a blighted heart. In the glittering throng I was to smile—be always sparkling, always gay, and even tremble to weep in my own closet. Others sink their sorrows in sleep ; but the pillow brought me torture. There I counted the moments of the long, dreary night, thinking of him I had lost, or seeing his form flit through my broken and troublous dreams. I was to meet him at the banquet, or tournament, and see only a stranger. His name was to resound in my ear, and to pass like an idle word. Every eye was to admire his beauty—every tongue laud his prowess ; I, who loved, who adored him—I alone was to be silent. Do you mark me, Sir ?

“Proceed, Madam. I do not lose a syllable.”

“My anguish and my burthen were to be increased,” resumed Louise. “I had borne up against them, and fate was resolved to crush me. The man I so dearly loved became the husband, as I was the wife, of another.”

“Fortune was indeed cruel!” exclaimed Francis.

“Oh! what bitterness filled my heart, when I saw her leave the altar, so proud and so happy, hand in hand with him! No wonder that she seemed my deadly enemy—that I looked upon her, at first, with envy, and then hated her.”

“This was unjust.”

“Do not reproach me. If my fault was great, my punishment surpassed it. Her husband, for whose sake I had almost

changed my nature, saw my antipathy to her; and ignorant of my motives, withdrew from me even the poor consolation I had found in his friendship. He became my foe. When my pride was to be humbled—my spirit mortified, he was my adversary. It was his eye that met mine, yet seemed not to see me—his freezing words that chilled my heart, which swelled with love for him. Did not my sufferings exceed my offence?"

"I must think so, indeed. But you have entangled me in a labyrinth I am unable to escape from. Can it be that you are still attached to this man, so unforgiving, and what is more, already a husband?"

"He is no longer so. With your consent I may be espoused to him to-morrow. The Duchess is dead."

"Duchess!" exclaimed Francis, with a wild

start. "Undeceive me directly, Madam, if I am mistaken in my suppositions. Is the man you so idolize the Duke de Bourbon?"

"My son, my son," cried Louise, in agitated tones, "restrain this passion, I beseech you."

"Speak, I say," returned the King. "I command you to answer me."

Louise buried her face in her hands. "You are right," she faltered. "It is Bourbon that I love."

"And you ask my consent to your union? Mine! I have listened to you attentively, and now hearken to me, while I swear, by my crown and my life—by my father's soul—by all I hold sacred ——"

"Oh! no, no!" cried Louise, running towards him, with her hands clasped in supplication. "You will not—you shall not, make that vow. The son of my heart, in

whom I have lived—whom I have reared so tenderly, watched so fondly, will not doom me to unhappiness. My fate must not be sealed by you, Francis! Do not forget that I am your mother.”

“Would you not sacrifice me, just to gratify this childish passion?” asked Francis, a little softened. “Shame, Madam, shame! You see this man already overgrown, lording it over half France, and waiting for a favourable moment to seize it all. You know my aversion to him, and his disaffection to me, and that he will only accept your hand as a means of helping him up to my throne; yet, in the face of all this, you would persuade me to sanction your infatuation!”

“You wrong him, Francis; only hear me a moment.”

“Hear *that!*” cried the King, as a loud

shout arose in the street. "Nay," he added, leading her to a window, "not only hear, but see!"

Looking forth, the Duchess perceived Bourbon, richly accoutred, and mounted on a stately black charger, preceding a train of horsemen, in sumptuous dresses of blue and gold, while a dense crowd of citizens pressed around, rending the air with acclamations.

"Behold your lover, Madam!" said Francis, bitterly. "Mark how low he bends to yon grimy smith, and good man cordwainer there, his trusty allies. Save us, Lord Constable! you will lose your plume. Not so low, I pray you, Sir. Your head is stiff enough to kings and nobles. Here, Sir, here! and my serene mother will raise it a span higher."

"You will not compassionate me, then?"

cried Louise, in tones of despair. "Discard your prejudices, if only for a moment. Dismiss the bugbear they have raised, though it be but in pity to me ; and a word will convince you that, if your apprehensions are well-founded, the alliance I propose is the wisest step you could take."

"I hear you, Madam," said the King, masking his anger with an incredulous smile. "Say on."

"Again you speak like my Francis," cried Louise : "again you are noble and generous, as well as just. Do you suppose, then, that I will be less your mother, when I am the wife of Bourbon ? Say he entertains the designs you imagine, can he long conceal them from me ? And will I aid him, think you, to overturn the throne of my son ; or will I not rather make him, what he once

was, its chief support? Pause, pause, Francis. The union that gives me happiness, restores you your soldier and councillor. Do not, in the same breath, condemn me to misery, and irreparably injure yourself."

"Madam, you distract me," cried Francis, restlessly pacing the room. "There may be something in what you say, but it is crude and undigested. I must consider well before I give you an answer."

"Not so, my son," said Louise. "You will debate it with your favourites, who are Bourbon's enemies, and I foresee what they will counsel. No! you have heard my reasoning, and must feel that it is just. Act for yourself,—act for me, your mother. Do my tears appeal to you in vain? Say, Francis, must your mother kneel to you?"

"Enough, madam. I will no longer oppose your wishes. It only remains to

inform the Constable of the honour you propose for him."

"My heart is too full to thank you," cried Louise.

"The Queen must negotiate the affair for you," pursued Francis, "as she stands highest in his favour. I will go to her at once, and give her the necessary instructions."

"Once more I thank you; but bear in mind that the Queen is not so well inclined to me as yourself."

"This is one of those misfortunes that I must always remember," replied Francis. "But adieu. I leave you to brighter fancies."

A few minutes after the monarch had retired, an usher entered.

"A holy father solicits an audience of your grace," he said to Louise, "in behalf of the Lady Mirandola."

"Ha!" exclaimed Louise; "I will see the

reverend man. Conduct him to the saloon.” And, as the page hastened to obey, she murmured, “The wise Agrippa warns me that the stars are adverse, yet all seems favourable. What can be pointed at? This Queen, perchance! How, if she plays me false? I must watch her close, or it may so happen. But now to hear of my fair hostage.”

And smiling exultingly, she quitted the room.

CHAPTER VI.

Love is not to be reason'd down, or lost
In high ambition, or a thirst of greatness.

ADDISON.

Love will never bear enslaving ;
Summer garments suit him best ;
Bliss itself is not worth having,
If we're by compulsion blest.

MOORE.

As Queen Claude, the consort of Francis, was an invalid, her closet was furnished with more regard to comfort than splendour, and a recess, screened by crimson hangings, contained a couch to which she could

retire at pleasure through the day, and there seek the repose her sinking frame required.

The illustrious Princess was reclining rather than sitting in a high-backed chair, placed on a dais, at the foot of which sat her favourite Maid of Honour, Julia de Vigny. Her features had originally been attractive, but the bloom which once adorned them was gone, giving place to a flush deep and burning, and heightened in effect by the brilliancy of her eye. Constant dejection appeared in her looks; and it was clear that no hand but That which, ministering to "the mind diseased," sometimes plucks "from the memory a rooted sorrow," could arrest her decline. That beneficent influence was not altogether wanting, and might be traced in an expression of pious endurance, gentleness, and even resignation,

blended with the other, which was more fascinating than beauty.

Humbled by a successful and exulting rival, supplanted in that which formed her dearest possession—the affections of Francis, loved by her with a devotion and ardour that time could not abate, Claude had made no effort to recover her ascendancy, but, in the midst of a gay and voluptuous court, led the life of a recluse. She breathed no complaint,—uttered no remonstrance, but submitted in silence to the King's defection, weary of the world, oppressed by its pomps and vanities, and longing for the repose of the tomb.

From time to time the loved attendant turned a glance of anxious interest on her face without once speaking, but was ultimately interrupted by the entrance of an usher, announcing the Duke de

Bourbon, whom Claude ordered to be admitted.

"Leave us, Julia," she added to her favourite, "and let the King be informed that my Lord Constable is with me."

As Julia hurried away, the visitor was introduced.

Charles, Duke de Bourbon, Constable of France, was now in the prime of life, possessing a person remarkable for manly beauty, and every grace esteemed in courts. Fine dark eyes, full of intelligence and vivacity, lighted up a countenance bronzed by foreign suns, and impressed with those characters of majesty and genius which exercise an irresistible influence on the beholder. His reputation accorded with this imposing appearance. In early life he had signalized himself at jousts and tournaments, snatching the prize from the greatest

warriors in Christendom ; and subsequently had been the hero of those brilliant and famous victories, which had cost France so much blood and treasure. But what rendered him more popular, was his unbounded generosity, supported by a revenue almost regal, and largely shared by the enslaved and suffering commons, who, regarding the nobles generally with intense hatred, looked up to him with reverence and affection.

“I received your message, Madam,” he said, after respectfully saluting the Queen, “and have come to learn your pleasure.”

“You are ever kind, good kinsman,” answered Claude. “I think often of the services you have rendered me, and the advantages I have derived from your friendship.”

“It is I who am the debtor, Madam, honoured with your confidence, and ad-

mitted to the privilege of conversing with you."

"Think you, then, cousin, that I forget—that I can ever forget, that fatal morning, when I was preserved by you from such painful humiliation? I was then proud—perhaps haughty, and my heart was wrung by it. Now I can bear mortification—at least, I can think, even speak of that, and be perfectly calm."

"I entreat you not to recall these recollections, Madam. They are as distressing to me as to yourself."

"Still we will turn back for a moment, as it has some reference to my object. You know that I refer to the day when Madame de Chateaubriant—see, I am calm!—when Madame, I say, first appeared in public as the avowed favourite of the King. Nay, forgive my tears—they are nothing. She

came, I say, and every one thronged to adore her—to parade themselves in her train, to court her smiles,—only for Julia I should have been alone, alone in my own court, a deserted wife, a fallen Queen, whom the spectators, perhaps, might pity, but were afraid to countenance.”

“Then they were false and dastardly traitors. Your highness merited all their attention.”

“I have learned to think leniently of them; but, in that bitter moment, deemed them ungenerous, if not cruel. Still their defection was only momentary. You appeared, and the crowd opened to admit you, while *she*, on whom all eyes centred, advanced to bid you welcome. How I trembled to see her siren smile, to hear her soft voice, as she approached you! I need not have feared. You replied to her ho-

neyed greeting with a cold bow, moving on to me ; and though a murmur of surprise ran through the saloon, all followed your steps. Bourbon knelt at my feet, and I was again a Queen."

"I did but my duty, Madam, and permit me to say, the duty was a privilege."

"You have ever since been my friend, I might say, my protector," resumed Claude ; "for I owe the consideration I receive to your influence. But, to speak no further of this ;—I need not remind you, from that day Madame de Chateaubriant became your enemy, and, by degrees, has effected a breach between you and the King."

"The enmity of such a person, gracious Madam, is a thing to be despised. If I have fallen under the King's displeasure, do not doubt that a time will come when he will see my integrity, and do me justice."

“ Meanwhile, cousin, every day sets you further apart, and you incur wrongs of which his highness is ignorant. The treasure you have lent him is not repaid ; your great services are forgotten ; your pensions stopped ; and even your rights of seignory infringed. I, kinsman, whom you have so kindly, generously supported, am the involuntary cause of this rupture. It is I who have estranged the King from you ; and you cannot wonder that I wish to see you friends again.”

“ It is what I heartily desire, your grace ; but we must wait.”

“ Nay,” said Claude, with a faint smile, “ reconciliation is nearer than you imagine. The King seeks it, as well as yourself.”

“ How say you, gracious Madam ? Is not some one misleading you ?”

“ I have it from his own lips,” returned Claude. “ He not only wishes to be recon-

ciled to you, but authorizes me to make a proposal, which, I think, will unite you for ever."

"Your highness amazes me. What does he propose?"

"What would, indeed, give peace and strength to France, kinsman—what would heal our unhappy dissensions, and restore to us concord and prosperity. In a word, he offers you the hand of his mother."

Bourbon uttered an exclamation.

"You change colour, good kinsman," faltered Claude. "Ah! what does this agitation mean?"

"It means, gracious Madam, that I am pained to reject an overture made to me through you."

"Oh! you do not reject it! Think, think of what I have said. To-morrow we will speak of it again."

“Your highness must excuse me. Had you asked my life, it should have been your’s, but I must not surrender my honour. No, believe me, my decision is fixed, immovable! I can never ally myself with Louise of Savoy.”

“Proud man!” exclaimed Louise, stepping from behind the hangings of the recess, and speaking in a voice tremulous with rage, “you shall rue this insolence. Look on me henceforward as your mortal foe!”

“Madam,” answered Bourbon, composedly, “I have never sought your friendship, and shall not fear your enmity.”

“Hold, my Lord, I entreat you!” cried Claude, in accents of terror. “Oh! Madam, you are to blame in speaking thus! Alas! here is the King.”

“You have come in good time, Sire,”

cried Louise, as Francis advanced, looking in amazement from one to another. "Behold your parent insulted, yourself humbled; your haughty vassal disdains the honour you proposed for him. He refuses my hand."

"How!" exclaimed Francis, furiously, and grasping the hilt of his sword. "I have borne with you a long time," he added, with flashing eyes, as he turned on Bourbon; "but this passes endurance."

"My liege," said Bourbon, unable to repress a burst of anger, "you mistake. It is I who have borne with you."

"Oh! Bourbon! kinsman!" cried Claude, "by your friendship for me, I conjure you to be silent. And, Sire, my husband, by the love you once bore me, do not so much wrong to your own honor as to speak harshly to our soldier."

Here her voice failed, and she sank, almost fainting, on the King's arm.

"Ah! Sire, do you again support me?" she then murmured, with a flood of tears. "I thank you, though it will not be for long. But first I owe you a service—my children a duty. It is this!"

She raised his hand, and placed it in that of Bourbon, saying—"Heaven bless you both! Be friends!"

As the scarcely audible words were uttered, her eyes closed, and the dying Queen fell back in a swoon.

CHAPTER VII.

Such an act,
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue, hypocrite: takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there: makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was not without a sigh that, on arriving at Rheims, Esme Noel reined up for a moment at an auberge, called "The Golden Lion," where Corinna and her companions alighted. Glad of a pretext for seeing her again, he begged to be the bearer of her commands to Mezieres, as soon as his

mission to the King was fulfilled ; and Corinna readily accepted the offer, having, from ignorance as to how she would be situated, given no instructions to those of her attendants left behind, but which an interview with the Duchess d'Angoulême would enable her to transmit to them. Well pleased at the result, Esme rode slowly away, though his heart and thoughts lingered at the auberge.

Morning was somewhat advanced, and the narrow streets of the ancient city were full of bustle ; but, as he shaped his course towards the palace, in order to obtain an instant audience of Francis, the Englishman scarcely heeded the gay shops on either hand, or knots of officers and courtiers, on foot and horseback, following the same route as himself. Imagination still chained him to Corinna, finding encouragement, in the

strange accident which threw her under his protection; for the wildest fancies. He thought with pride of the impression likely to be produced by his services, on a nature so gentle and sensitive, which, be it known, had made a far deeper impression on him. In fact, the young adventurer was in love, and with a rashness inseparable from youth, did not pause to consider that his mistress was beyond reach.

Esme, indeed, could put forward few claims to consideration, beyond a manly heart, a skilful sword, and an honourable name. Ancestral possessions, once including the fairest manors of Rutlandshire, had gradually dwindled, till, at last, the acres remaining were confiscated to the crown, by the implication of his father in Perkin Warbeck's rebellion. Made an orphan by the executioner's axe, he was placed in a

monastery, to be educated for the priesthood ; but, preferring the more attractive profession of arms, had broken out of the sacred retreat, in company with honest Barnaby, and made his way to France. Here he found a distant relation named William De la Pole, who, as representative of the fallen House of York, had given himself the title of La Rose Blanche ; and, through him, he procured an immediate introduction into the French service. This, however, the airs of sovereignty assumed by De la Pole had rendered irksome, and he waited only till the term of enrolment should expire, to engage his sword with another master.

Approaching the palace, the travel-stained rider and jaded steed attracted the notice of numerous knights and courtiers assembled in front of it, or pacing to and fro in groups ; and, seeing such a concourse in attendance,

Esme began to consider how he was to gain access to the King.

“What, cousin mine! you here?” cried a voice, interrupting his cogitation. “I thought you were at Mezieres, studying on short rations the advantages of obedience.”

“Come, peace, La Rose Blanche!” said the young and sparkling Bonnivet, Admiral of France. “Your kinsman brings us news, I am sure.”

“By my soul, I believe, the poor fellow has been starved!” exclaimed La Rose Blanche, in a softened voice. “What are your tidings, Noel?”

“Bad enough, kinsman.—But they must go first to the King’s ear, if you will lead me to him.”

“What say you, my Lord?” said the Pretender to Marshal Lautrec, a tall, stern-looking man, bearing little resemblance to

his beautiful sister, Anne de Chateaubriant ;
“will you help the boy to an audience ?”

“Cannot Bonnivet do it ?” answered Lautrec, carelessly. “Take him to Madame, Admiral. She wishes to speak with you.”

“I will attend her, then,” replied Bonnivet. “Come, Sir. You shall not want a chamberlain, were it only for your own sake, and much more for your errand’s.”

Consigning Esme’s horse to one of a throng of attendants, loitering in the palace-vestibule, he led him up a private staircase to a saloon, from which they were introduced to the apartments of Anne de Chateaubriant.

This lovely and fascinating woman was the wife of the Count of that name, and the circumstances attending her separation from him are too romantic to be suppressed. Fearing to encounter temptation, he had

carefully secluded her for some years in a gloomy castle, a considerable distance from the Court ; but, in spite of his precautions, the fame of her extraordinary beauty spread abroad, and finally became known to the King. Francis rallied him on his apparent jealousy, and requested so earnestly that the fair recluse should be brought to the capital, that Chateaubriant, having exhausted every excuse, could at last only evade compliance by a stratagem. Informing the Countess, therefore, of what had occurred, he arranged to write a letter on his return to Paris, requiring her presence at Court ; but she was on no account to obey the summons, unless it was accompanied by his signet-ring. The letter was accordingly written, but arriving without the appointed token, Anne refused to leave the country ; and her reply being produced, convinced

Francis that she remained there from choice. Overjoyed at his success, Chateaubriant forgot his prudence, and confided the secret to a favourite valet. By him it was betrayed to Francis, who, concealing his knowledge of it, persuaded Chateaubriant to send a second summons to the Countess, and privately forwarded a counterpart of the signet-ring, as if coming from her husband. This led to the desired result; and Chateaubriant retired in disgust to a remote province, leaving his wife to rule the Court.

Madame de Chateaubriant was pacing the room with a musing step, when Bonnivet and Esme entered.

"What! meditating, Countess?" cried the Admiral. "Is it possible you can be serious?"

"I have no cause to be so," said Anne

gaily ; “for I have just heard a tale of my Lord Constable, which makes me quite cheerful. But who is this ?”—And she glanced inquiringly at Esme.

“A messenger from Bayard,” answered Bonnivet. “He has made his way here—our Lady knows how!—through the midst of the Emperor’s army.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Anne with a look of interest, though not understanding the merit of the feat. “You have ridden hard, Sir, I see. Is all well with the Chevalier ?”

“As well as it can be in a beleagured town, madam,” replied Esme.

“My friend brings pressing news from him, Countess,” observed Bonnivet. “They can only be disclosed to the King, and I must beg you to introduce us to his highness, or much delay will occur.”

“You must be patient,” said Anne with

a smile. "The King is conferring with the Duchess d'Angoulême on a matter of great moment, and cannot be interrupted."

"Not even by you?"

"Ha! ha! You think I may do anything. Now a word with you, apart here. And do you, Sir, rest satisfied a while. The King will send for me anon, and I will then conduct you to him."

Motioning Esme to a seat, the gay Countess led Bonnivet to the recess of a window, where they conversed together earnestly for some time, when an attendant informed her that Francis was disengaged; and she immediately turned to Esme, inviting him and Bonnivet to follow her from the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

A lazy, proud, unprofitable crew,
The vermin, gender'd from the rank corruption
Of a luxurious state.

CUMBERLAND.

I am no courtier, no fawning dog of state,
To lick and kiss the hand that buffets me.

SEWELL.

DAMES and nobles, attired in magnificent court-dresses, were dispersed in groups round the presence-chamber, where Francis, seated on a dais, in a chair of state, conversed in low tones with Jean de Lorraine, whose arrogant look and proud form, assorted well

with his costume of a Cardinal. At their side stood a dark, slight man, in the robes of Chancellor, known to fame as the learned but unprincipled Du Prat, President of the Parliament of Paris. A step lower sat Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, talking with Francois de Bourbon, Count of St. Paul, and Robert Stuart, Seigneur d'Aubigny, who, as a prince of the blood-royal of Scotland, enjoyed the distinction of the dais.

As Anne de Chateaubriant led forward Esme, a shrill whistle was heard, and a diminutive, sharp-featured man, grotesquely apparalled, having on his head a fool's cap and bells, bounded nimbly through the throng, mounting the dais, and presenting himself before Francis,—

“Here, Franky, take your cap and bauble,” he cried, “and let me go my way. I will have no more of your worshipful service.”

“How now, Triboulet?” exclaimed Francis. “What impertinence is this?”

“Impertinence, good gossip!” cried Triboulet. “Art thou losing thy wit, as well thy other commodities? Now, I pray you, define me impertinence. Is it to do one’s self a good turn, at a seasonable time? This were to be pertinent, I think, or my grandame has taught me wrong.”

“Go to! I will not waste words on a fool.”

“Therein lies the whole matter, gossip; so I say again, take thy bauble, and I will be gone.”

“Your reason, good Wisdom? You must give me a reason.”

“Simply, then, I will not serve the man when I can follow the master.”

“This is poor fooling,” rejoined the King. “None can be called my master.”

"The knave is more traitor than fool," scowled Cardinal Lorraine, who was at mortal feud with Triboulet.

"A Solon! a Solon!" exclaimed the Jester. "Hear, all whom it may concern, the wise, the witty, the reverend Lord Cardinal! He has made a discovery—a wonder! Long live Solon!"

"Silence, thou empty hogshead!" said the Cardinal, enraged. "It needs little sagacity to discover that thou art a fool."

"And less, Lord Cardinal, to see that thou art a miracle of knowledge," cried Triboulet. "Yet why hide the truth under that scarlet robe, gossip? Oh, Mammon! thou hast much to answer for—much, much! even to the glosing of this reverend's man words. Fye, Sir Mammon! fye! would you make him a heretic?"

"Thou art a lying knave," cried Lorraine;

“and his highness has well said that words are wasted on you.”

“Did you not speak heresy?” asked Triboulet. “Now I call every one to witness, an I, Franky, you be my judge, if I do not prove that the reverend Cardinal spoke falsely.”

“To the point,” said Francis, “and be brief.”

“Briefly, then,—he sanctions, what you assert, that you have no master?”

“Assuredly.”

“Then I say again he is a heretic; for you have a master in the Church. How! have I hit you? But he calls her your mistress, mayhap; and certainly she hath one quality of that brood—she gives nothing for nothing.”

“This is good,” cried Henry of Navarre, who had secretly embraced Calvinism, and

entertained a strong antipathy to everything Papal. "Say on fool, thou deservest to be made a professor."

"Ha! gossip Henry!" cried Triboulet, "do you scent a priest? On my conscience, thou hast a rare nose for such things, though thou see'st as far into a joke as a mill-stone."

"Thy jokes are all mill-stones, gossip," said Henry, good humouredly.

"The fool is silenced," cried the Cardinal.

"Nay, my Lord," interposed Du Prat, with whom Triboulet was secretly in league, "it seems that we are all wandering from the true question. What we want is, the fool's reason for relinquishing his bauble."

"Aptly spoken, lawyer," said Triboulet, "and withal like one who hath more wit than honesty. But were I on the defensive, this should not serve you, seeing that, as a

courtier, I could slip through your fingers like an eel."

"You grow tedious, fool," said Francis. "Either tell us your mind in a few words, or be at peace."

"Do you seek peace?" asked Triboulet.

"Yes."

"Then hold thy peace, gossip. As for me, my matter shall be crammed into a nutshell. I will speak by the card, Franky; throw a whole sentence into a syllable. Now, I pray you, unriddle me this riddle—

Shining both within one sphere,
Which the greater, say, is here—
Bourbon king, or Bourbon peer?

But room, room for my Lord Constable! Take your fool's traps, Franky! I am free of you. My Lord Constable, will you receive a poor motley into your service?"

Bourbon, still advancing, appeared quite unconscious that he was addressed.

"My Lord," cried Du Prat, "you are losing all the sport. The fool speaks to you."

"Well, I hear you," answered Bourbon gravely.

A loud laugh followed his words, in the midst of which Anne de Chateaubriant presented herself.

"I must request your attention for a moment, Sire," she said. "This gentleman brings you intelligence from Mezières."

"From Mezières!" cried Francis; and a murmur of surprise spread around. "Impossible! How did you get through the enemy's lines, Sir?"

"More easily than I expected, my liege," answered Esme. "But my report is for your highness's ear alone."

"It is well," returned Francis, and stepping apart, Esme communicated to him Bayard's message.

"He must be relieved," said the King, "though it should cost us a battle. For yourself, accept my thanks ; your good service shall not go unrewarded."

"I am much beholden to your highness," replied Esme ; "and must not omit to acquaint you with another particular, which is that I escorted here the Lady Mirandola and two of her suite, who fell into our hands in a sortie."

His last words were overheard by Lorraine and Du Prat.

"Is this the Cardinal Farnese's niece ?" asked the Prelate of the Chancellor.

"The same !" answered Du Prat. "A rich prize for this adventurer, if, as I believe, he has made the most of his time."

“Ma foi ! you are jesting,” returned Lorraine, with a sinister smile. “However, young damsels require watching, and I will see that they do not meet again. I have other views for her.”

In fact, the wily Cardinal had conceived the design of attracting the King to Corinna, and so raising a rival to Anne de Chateaubriant, whom he longed to overthrow.

“How did this circumstance happen ?” asked Francis of Esme.

The Englishman related briefly the particulars of Corinna’s capture.

“So you were the hero of that affair also?” smiled the King. “On my word, young man, you promise fair ; and, if appearances may be trusted, we shall hear something more of you.” Turning to Bonnivet, he added, “Our long-expected hostage has ar-

rived, Admiral ; so you will see her placed in charge of the Duchess d'Angoulême, in accordance with our contract ; and then set the Count of Mirandola at liberty."

"Permit me to observe, Sire, that this duty should be fulfilled by me," observed Bourbon. "It belongs to my office of Constable."

"Perhaps you will put in a claim for the hostage, my Lord, as well as for the Count," said Francis coldly.

"Ah ! Sire," cried Anne de Chateaubriant. "She is a lady, and my Lord Constable has never been distinguished for gallantry."

"His lordship prefers more profitable things," said Bonnivet. "In truth, I marvel that one who owns half France, and holds so many high offices, can remember, much less perform, all his different duties."

“Ah,” observed Marshal Lautrec, “or even find time to attend the Court.”

“If he is so much occupied,” said Francis, loud enough to be heard by Bourbon, “I would endeavour to dispense with his attendance.” And, raising his voice, he added, “I have made known my commands in this business, my Lord, and you need give yourself no trouble therein.”

A haughty inclination of the head was Bourbon’s reply, and he turned to retire.

“By your leave, cousin, I accompany you,” cried the Count of St. Paul.

“And I, my Lord,” cried Robert Stewart.

“And I, and I,” cried several others.

“They have found us an apple of discord,” murmured the King of Navarre; “and we want only a few bigoted priests to set it rolling. Well, I will go with the stream.”

He sidled off after Bourbon, and in a few minutes the saloon was comparatively deserted.

“Our gentle kinsman, it seems, draws every one in his train,” muttered Francis, unable to conceal his chagrin; “and will soon tower above the throne.”

“High as he thinks himself, Sire,” said Du Prat, in a low voice, “you have but to say the word, and I will pull him down.”

“Ha!”

“Did not your serene mother discover my intentions to your highness?”

“She spoke just now of some wild scheme; but I thought it dictated by her resentment, and too chimerical to act upon.”

“You shall find, my liege, that it can be realized, and may even now consider that proud and traitorous man as ruined. Sire,

sire, believe me—*am not I to be his judge?*”

“I see—you are right,” said Francis, slightly colouring. “Tell me no more.”

“One word, my liege,” murmured Cardinal Lorraine, as the King was stepping towards Anne de Chateaubriant. “You must see this Lady Mirandola. She is a perfect mirror of beauty.”

“Have you learnt that already? Pr’ythee, how did you acquire the intelligence?”

“With my own eyes, Sire, in Italy, where I saw her often.”

“But after her fatiguing journey she will be invisible to-night, and even to-morrow will be somewhat early to visit her. If we alarm the Duchess d’Angoulême, an interview may be difficult.”

“In that will lie the merriment, my liege. A billet shall inform her Grace that two

poor Capuchins, skilled in magic, desire to wait upon her ; and in this disguise we will gain admittance."

"That will do well," laughed the light-hearted monarch. "I shall not fail to join you."

He now turned to Anne de Chateaubriant and Bonnivet, and retired by a private door.

CHAPTER IX.

Duchess. Well said, my masters ; and welcome all :
To this geer ; the sooner, the better.

Bolingbroke. Patience, good lady ; wizards know
their times.

SHAKSPEARE.

ESME found, on inquiry, that his late companions made but a short stay at "The Golden Lion," having, as soon as they had rested, proceeded to the lodging of the Duchess d'Angoulême. Much fatigued, he installed himself at the auberge, to await orders from Francis.

Next morning he was surprised, on awak-

ing, to see a person lying at his feet, and quickly discovered that it was Barnaby. A slight kick tumbled the worthy henchman on the floor.

“It is you, then !” said Esme. “I thought at first it was a vision.”

“I thought it was an earthquake,” said Barnaby, as he picked himself up. “Is this the welcome your worship gives me, after the chase I have had ?”

“What in the name of wonder brought you here ?”

“A horse, noble master.”

“You are still mysterious,” answered Esme ; “but I need not care for particulars, so long as you are safe and sound ; and, I confess, I am well pleased to see you.”

“There is something in hand, then, I warrant, or you would not be so benevolent. But, mercy on me ! I forget all this time

that you are waiting for breakfast. They shall soon get it ready."

Esme replied with a laugh, thinking Barnaby's zeal in the matter not entirely disinterested. Be that as it might, he proved a good caterer ; and by the time Esme was dressed, a substantial breakfast appeared, to which they both did justice. It was then determined that Barnaby should repair to the palace, and ascertain what hour would be most suitable for Esme to attend Corinna, according to their previous arrangement.

The trusty henchman was some time absent, but Esme passed the interval very agreeably, thinking of the object of his mission. These reflections were interrupted by Barnaby's return.

"Well, did you deliver my message?" asked Esme.

"I gave it to the waiting-woman," re-

plied Barnaby ; “and a very sensible one she is.”

“And when am I to visit the Lady Mirandola ?”

“There lies the difficulty ; for they have placed her under lock and key, as it were, and no one is to have access to her.”

“I will demand it. My word is pledged to carry her commands to Mezières, and it must not be broken.”

“This is well ; but the waiting-woman—Minna, as she calls herself—thinks that the order has been given on your worship’s account, and, therefore, that you especially will be excluded. Still the thing can be managed, as you shall see.”

Here he produced a sack, which Esme in his impatience had not noticed, and drew from it the frock and cowl of a Capuchin,

adroitly throwing them over his person, like one well acquainted with such attire.

"Pax vobiscum!" he then said, in a solemn voice.

"Excellent!" laughed Esme. "You bear yourself so reverently, the Pope himself would be deceived in you. Your design is, I suppose, that I am to gain admittance to the palace in this habit?"

"In the fellow to it, which is in the sack; for the damsel counsels that I should accompany you, as two will be less suspected than one. We are to go to-night, at eight of the clock, and inquire for Padre Stephano, leaving the rest to be arranged by her."

"Let her do as she will," said Esme. "We will not fail to be there."

At the appointed hour they assumed their disguise, and slipping out unperceived,

made for the palace. Arrived at the part appropriated to the Duchess, they entered a waiting-hall, and inquired for Padre Stephano.

"I cannot let you pass to him," said an usher ; "but he shall be told that you are here."

As he went to call the priest, another attendant stepped forward.

"Two Capuchins!" he murmured. "Pray, Sirs, are you not the reverend fathers we are expecting?"

"Doubtless," answered Esme ; "for they know we are coming."

"Then, I am ordered to wait on your reverences, if you will please to follow," said the Page.

He led the way up a staircase, terminated by large folding-doors, which he threw open ; and before they could retreat,

ushered them into the presence of the Duchess d'Angoulême.

"Ha! the reverend magicians!" cried Louise. "Retire to the further cabinet," she added to two attendant damsels, in one of whom Esme recognised Corinna, "and wait there till I summon you."

"Here's a dilemma!" muttered Barnaby, prevented by Esme from rushing out.

"Welcome, reverend Sirs," said the Duchess. "The billet, announcing your arrival at Rheims, and tendering your services, afforded me great satisfaction. But which of you is the learned brother Barnabas; for though I doubt not the skill of the pupil, the question I would ask requires an experienced astrologer?"

"Whatever it be, Madam, answered Esme, "brother Barnabas here is so well skilled in the science, that I make no doubt, he will solve it."

“Me !” said Barnaby, confounded. “No, no ! do it yourself.”

“You have, I see, a good opinion of your scholar, father,” observed Louise, diverted at what she considered his eccentricity; “and, no doubt, have taken much pains to instruct him.”

“For the pains I have bestowed on him, Madam, answered Barnaby, becoming more confident, “they cannot be told ; but this would trouble me little, were they not almost thrown away. Brother Esmegristus here, Madam, is a dullard—a poor, heavy fellow, Madam—willing, mayhap, but rather”——And he significantly tapped his forehead.

“Rascal !” muttered Esme.

“You are too severe upon him, I am sure,” smiled Louise. “But come to my withdrawing-room, where we shall be alone ;

for I have ordered that no one is to be admitted but yourselves."

Flinging back some drapery, she disclosed a state closet, and led the way in.

"Now I will seek the Lady Mirandola," thought Esme, "and leave Brother Barnabas to display his attainments."

As he disappeared behind one of the columns, the saloon was entered by Francis and the Cardinal Lorraine, also disguised as Capuchins.

"Her grace is just passing into the withdrawing-room, reverend fathers," said their conductor, catching sight of Louise through the parted drapery. "Her orders are that I am to leave you here, and you must follow her unattended."

The Cardinal mechanically advanced, and was espied by the Duchess, who, finding that Esme had not entered the closet, came forth to look for him.

"I must run for it, I see," said Barnaby, as soon as her back was turned. "Now or never."

He raised the further drapery, and, stepping softly out, passed round the columns to the door. Here he cast a look behind, and discovered the Cardinal.

"What, my master back!" he muttered. "Nay, then, I must not desert him, come what will of it."

"Where can the King be?" murmured the Cardinal, suddenly discovering that Francis had sidled off. "My purpose in approaching you, Madam," he said to Louise, "is to offer you the best entertainment my limited knowledge will afford."

"And I am certain it is more than you pretend to," replied Louise, preceding him into the chamber.

"Ha!" thought the Cardinal, perceiving

Barnaby behind them : " the King is with us ! I have nothing to fear."

" Well ?" whispered Barnaby.

" Be on your guard," replied the Cardinal ; " and remember that it is not easy to deceive your serene mother."

" Serene bodkin !" said Barnaby.

" We are now safe from interruption," observed Louise, who had been engaged for a moment at a small cabinet, from which she took a scroll of paper ; " and you must understand that what I am about to entrust to you is a *secret de la masse*. You promise me never to divulge it."

" Be assured, Madam, it shall never pass my lips," replied Barnaby. " As for brother Esmegristus, if it is only worth remembering, he is sure to forget it, poor fellow : therefore, I will answer for him, too."

" You certainly undervalue him," smiled

Louise. "Well, this horoscope will test his knowledge, and enable me to profit by your proficiency."

"Humph!" said Barnaby, to whom cabalistic figures were more mysterious than Greek.

"It has been cast by Cornelius Agrippa," resumed Louise; "and is said to involve a very singular conjunction, auguring good to the subject, and disaster to others. I must request you to deal plainly with me, and express your sentiments without reservation."

"Ah! I see," mused Barnaby, attentively studying the scroll—"Yes, there, and there, and there. What think you, brother Esmeristus?"

"I am quite of your opinion," answered the Cardinal. "It is very ominous."

"Very," said Barnaby, with a dolorous shake of his head.

“Mars entering Taurus, is in opposition to Mercury,” said the Cardinal.

“To Mercury?” cried Louise. “Is it not Venus?”

“Venus, certainly,” cried Barnaby. “Brother Esmegristus, you grow worse and worse.”

“I say it is Mercury, brother,” said the Prelate, thinking it dangerous to yield.

“Brother, pr’ythee do not show your ignorance at this rate,” said Barnaby. “Think you I do not know Venus when I see her better than you know Mercury. Go to, brother. I repeat, it is Venus.”

“And, I fear, you are right, reverend sir,” said Louise; “for you coincide in opinion with Agrippa, and I have rarely found him err. Of course, you have discovered who is the subject of the horoscope?”

"Oh, do not doubt it, Madam," answered Barnaby; "but you may be assured of my secrecy. Even brother Esmegristus shall never know it from me, if he cannot discover it himself."

"It is the Duke de Bourbon's," said the Cardinal, detecting an inscription in the corner.

"Hush! hush!" cried the Duchess; "but who have we here?"

The drapery was pushed aside, and a third Capuchin entered the chamber.

CHAPTER X.

Ill befall

Such meddling priests, who kindle up confusion.

ROWE.

LOWER down the saloon was an ante-room, to which Corinna had retired, in company with the Duchess's other attendant, Anne de Pisselieu, destined at a future time to form a prominent figure in the annals of France. On entering, they were met by Minna, who, however, was so agitated, that she saw only her mistress.

"Oh! Madam!" she exclaimed, in broken accents; "what can we do? I fear, he is lost."

"Lost! who do you mean?" cried the ladies together.

“The English cavalier, Madam. I was prevented from informing you before,—that he arranged to come here to-night, just to take leave of your ladyship; and, being unable to obtain admittance otherwise, he and his man were to disguise themselves as Capuchins.”

“Alas! how could he venture on such a stratagem!” cried Corinna. “If they intercept him, he will incur severe punishment.”

“Is this the gallant who has become the talk of the Court?” asked Mademoiselle de Pisselieu, eagerly.

“He will be more talked of to-morrow, my lady,” answered Minna; “for they have introduced him to the Duchess as a magician.”

“Say no more, or you will kill me,” cried Anne, overcome with laughter.

“Oh! he is here!” exclaimed Corinna tremulously, as Esme darted into the room.

“Magic indeed!” cried Anne, clapping her hands with delight; “a monk transformed into an adventurous cavalier! Good even to you, holy father! and pray you be of good heart, and I will keep vigil for you without.”

And throwing a long veil over her head, she glided back into the saloon.

“I owe you an apology, Madam,” said Esme to Corinna, “for waiting upon you in this costume; but it would have been painful for me to leave Rheims without your commands.”

“You are most kind,” answered Corinna, still slightly agitated; “but how could you expose yourself, for so slight a cause, to so much danger? I tremble to think what may happen, should you be discovered.”

“Do not fear that. The risk is small; but, were it otherwise, it should not deter me from offering you my services.”

"I am already too much indebted to you," said Corinna, with a smile of gratitude, "and glad that there is no necessity to increase the obligation. My father passes Mezières, on his way to the Emperor's camp, and intends himself to give the necessary instructions to my retinue."

"You could not find a messenger more suitable," answered Esme; "and, though disappointed myself, I am not less pleased at the Count's liberation. No doubt too, he will reach Mezières before I can."

"Possibly, not; for though he set out this morning, his shattered health will compel him to travel very slowly. I am the more unhappy at being separated from him under such circumstances."

"It must be most painful for you, but your captivity will probably be of short duration. I shall not find you here, if I ever return to Rheims."

There was a touch of melancholy in the Englishman's tone, as he thus spoke, that Corinna could not but notice.

"You speak as though your return were doubtful," she said. "Is it so?"

"A soldier going against the enemy cannot answer for his destination, you know," returned Esme, with affected gaiety. "Besides, my engagement with the King of France terminates, as soon as Mezières is relieved; and it is unlikely that I shall renew it."

"Then I see you for the last time?" said Corinna, unconsciously dropping a rose, which she had held in her hand.

"Fortune cannot mean thus cruelly by me!" cried Esme, despondingly. "I will not—must not think so!" Checking himself, with some confusion, he added, as he picked up the fallen rose, "Have you thrown this fair flower away, Madam? In

that case, I would beg permission to retain it, though it is, I see, the emblem of my foes."

"Of your foes?" said Corinna, changing colour. "Oh! I remember now. It is the badge of the English House of Lancaster; and you, no doubt, are for York?"

"Else I should not be here. For York my father died, and I have become a wanderer."

"How sad!" exclaimed Corinna, in tones of deep sympathy. "And would you take an enemy's colour from me, whom you have so obliged?"

"It will remind me only of you," said Esme gallantly; "and therefore can recall no memories but what are pleasing."

This dialogue would not have proceeded so far, only for the precaution of Anne de Pisselieu, who, in stepping into the saloon, encountered the King, disguised as a Capuchin.

"*Benedicite*, my daughter!" he cried. "Shall I confess you to-night?"

"It is the King!" thought Anne, recognising his voice. And she said demurely, "I have nothing to confess, father."

"Fye, fye!" rejoined Francis. "None of us are free from fault, child; and, least of all, an attendant of the Court. Look into your heart then, and speak unreservedly; for, being myself a sinner, I can make allowance for the frailty of others."

"This is most considerate, Reverend Sir; and were my conscience troubled, would embolden me to seek consolation of you; but, alas! good father, there is no more chance of doing ill here, under the eye of my mistress, than if I were cooped up in a convent."

"From your words, daughter, it seems that you would transgress if opportunity permitted, and positively regret the want of it. Let me tell you that the thought is as bad as the deed."

"Is it possible?"

"Be assured it is so."

"Then I am the most wretched of women!" exclaimed Anne, in accents of despair.

"How!" cried Francis. "What can you have done? But, be your offence what it may"—here he took her hand, but in so paternal a manner, that Anne suffered him to retain it—"there is not the smallest occasion for dejection. The Church is forgiving, and if I understand you right, your transgression is only mental?"

"That is all, father."

"Just so," said Francis, in his most insinuating tone. "You have been thinking, too fondly, mayhap, of some idle gallant?"

"Worse, worse, father?"

"Worse?"

"Yes, I have been thinking of the King himself."

"Of the King? Well, well, this is not

such a bad matter, after all. We are bound to look kindly on the King ; and it is not strange that a young maid, innocently-minded, should view him, mayhap, too partially, though it is said—for I pretend not to judge myself—that he is likely enough to win a lady's favour."

" Ah ! my father !"

" Take courage, child."

" This is not it."

" No ?"

" No ! for my mind is so perverse, I cannot see our good King's perfections ; and to me he appears a very indifferent-looking man."

" My child, have you lost your eyes ?"

" And as for his boasted wit, I find him a very dullard."

" ' This of the King ?'

" He is already growing grey, and will soon be as fat as a friar."

“Daughter ! daughter !”

“They say, too, he prowls about in disguise, listening to what people report of him, so that one is, as it were, always in his clutches.”

“My daughter, it is clear that you have never seen the King, and that some one has fabricated these aspersions to mislead you. Believe me, his highness is a very different person from what you imagine, as, if your beauty equals your vivacity, he will but too soon give you occasion to know.”

“It is you, father, who do not know him, as your observations clearly testify. The King look at me ! Have you not heard that he thinks no man handsome but himself, and no woman beautiful but Madame de Chateaubriant ?”

“And you, I suppose, think Madame’s charms inferior to your own ? Ah ! daughter, I must warn you against the

delusions of vanity, which so often prove a pitfall to woman, and may now be blinding you. I will not say that it is so, as your veil prevents my judging. Remove it, and I will frankly tell you my opinion."

"Declare it, then!" cried Anne, throwing off her veil.

"Most beautiful!" cried Francis, in admiration, "One word from those lips would make me your slave!"

"Ha! ha! a pretty priest!" laughed the Maid of Honour, as she sprang towards an opposite door, and darted out of the saloon.

As Francis, somewhat disconcerted, was turning round the nearest column, he ran against Esme, who had just stolen forth from the ante-chamber.

"Can this be you, Cardinal?" cried the monarch. "Ha! a stranger! speak, Sir, I command you!"

"The King!" cried Esme. And, sinking

on his knee, he added, "Your pardon, my liege. I am no Churchman, but the Chevalier Bayard's orderly, Esme Noel."

"I understand," said Francis, good-naturedly. "You came here to visit the Lady Mirandola, to whom you have been playing the faithful esquire. Well, well, in consideration of your good service, I shall not betray you; but mark me! there must be no more of these adventures. Now, begone."

Leaving Esme to retire, he raised the drapery of the state ante-room, and presented himself before the Duchess and her companions.

"I am your grace's poor beadsman," he said, in a feigned voice, replying to Louise's interrogation—"Friar Barnabas, the astrologer."

"Audacious!" exclaimed Cardinal Lorraine. "Friar Barnabas is here!"

“Where?” returned Francis, looking alternately at the Cardinal and Barnaby. “Out upon you, you wolves in sheep’s clothing! You, astrologers?”

“What does this mean?” cried Louise, amazed.

“It means, gracious Madam, that you are imposed upon,” said Francis. “These men are neither astrologers nor friars; and one, I am sure, is more used to a robe of scarlet than a shirt of hair.”

“Avaunt, fiend!” retorted the Cardinal, in a faltering voice. “With these holy beads I defy thee!”

“A Capuchin with a gold rosary!” cried Francis. “This is wonder upon wonder. But command him to disclose his face, Madam; and you will find it no strange one. See, my charms work upon him. Jean de Lorraine, throw back your cowl!”

“Speak to him, my liege,” said the Car-

dinal :—but Barnaby, whose help he invoked, had vanished.

“ If you would disprove this good man’s words, Sir,” said Louise, angrily, “ doff your cowl.”

“ The King shall answer for me, gracious Madam,” replied the Cardinal. “ He is in the saloon, and I will request his attendance. May our Lady guard you !” And he made a precipitate retreat from the room.

“ Ha ! ha ! ha !” laughed Francis, throwing off his cowl. “ Your grace must forgive my frolic, though it has been partly at your expense. I have avenged you on the Cardinal, who was the designer of it, and now his presumption must be forgotten. Ha ! ha ! I believe he set me down for the arch-fiend himself.”

“ Your jests are beyond endurance, Sir,” returned the Duchess. “ I think you might

break them on some more suitable person than your parent."

"Nay, my mother, do not be offended. It was not you, but your fair hostage, whom we intended to surprise, but, I believe, she has out-manceuvred us. There, I see, you pardon me; and now let me lead you to your closet; for I have something of moment to impart to you."

Louise suffered him to take her hand, and he conducted her from the room.

CHAPTER XI.

Angel of death ! 'tis Hassan's cloven crest !

BYRON.

IN a chamber of the castle of Mezières sat the Chevalier Bayard, resting on his hand a pale and wasted cheek, too plainly expressive of suffering. It was many hours since he had tasted food ; continual watching had inflamed his eyes ; strength and hope were both wavering ; but his devotion to France was unshaken. His first and last thought were for her.

“The sally-party has assembled,” said Montmorenci, entering ; “but you will probably alter their destination ; for the enemy seems preparing to storm the breach.”

"It is ready for them," replied Bayard.
"You will be able to hold it for another day."

"I? Am I not to command the sortie?"

"No! your country imposes on you a harder duty—that which Leonidas rendered Sparta. If succours do not arrive to-morrow, you must perish in the breach."

"And you?"

"I go with the sortie."

"Never to return," said Montmorenci.

"My friend—my brother, can you do me this wrong?"

"*Ma foi!*" replied Bayard, shrugging his shoulders, "what would you have? I shall die only a few hours before you."

"What may not happen in those few hours! When death stares us in the face, they are years. They may be your preservation. Besides, this command is my right; and to take it on yourself, is to degrade me."

"Not when I bequeath you a post so

honourable : therefore, say no more, as my resolution is fixed. Hark !”

“It is the cannonade,” said Montmorenci.

“Well, we know our duty !” replied Bayard. “Adieu !”—And the two friends embraced.

Montmorenci repaired to the breach, now assailed by the enemy’s guns, covering a column of stormers, who advanced unmolested as far as the moat. Here, however, they were swept by a cross fire from the ramparts, directed with such precision that every ball seemed to tell ; and Bayard, dashing out of the sally-port, attacked their rear, causing instant confusion. Many were killed, or disabled, in the onslaught ; but being all picked men, and emboldened by their superior numbers, the main body rallied, and continued the conflict. This was of the most desperate character, and maintained on both sides with the utmost ardour.

The French, especially, though a mere handful, fought like giants ; and Bayard flew from file to file, stimulating, by his presence and example, the courage of all. But wherever a momentary advantage was gained, and the Imperialists driven back, fresh forces appeared, and renewed the combat, while every moment diminished the numbers of the French. Thus, in a short time, half the enemy's army were on the spot, commanded by the General in person, the Count of Nassau.

"Surrender, Chevalier !" he cried, confronting Bayard. "You have done enough!"

"Never shall you take me alive," answered the good Knight. "Courage, my hearts ! courage !"

"Then, you must die !" shouted Nassau.

Bayard, though scarcely able to keep his saddle, met him manfully, and, by a dextrous blow, struck the sword from his hand.

A dozen weapons rose in its place, and a trooper seized his horse, cutting him off from assistance, while his broken ranks, no longer animated by their General, were assailed with new vigour. All seemed lost, when a tremendous shout, rising above the din of the fray, echoed the proud watchword of "France ! France ! a Bourbon !"

The effect was electric. Both French and Imperialists caught up the cry, and on every side was heard that victorious name, mingled with a murmur of "He comes !"

Bourbon and his men-at-arms alighted on the spot like an avalanche, driving the combatants into one promiscuous mass. The Imperialists fled so precipitately, that in their retreat, Bayard and his soldiers were swept along with them ; and the good Knight remained in as much danger as before. He was extricated by Esme Noel, who was among the foremost of Bourbon's

followers, and had quickly espied his old commander. A furious charge was then made on the flying Imperialists, which again carried Esme away, and he was soon side by side with Bourbon. A bugle in the rear, sounding the recall, caused them to rein up.

“Can you see who they are?” cried Bourbon, looking towards a small body of horsemen, who were galloping round the front of the castle.

“It is the King, my Lord,” answered Esme; “I can distinguish the oriflamb.”

In fact, it was now clear that one of the party bore aloft the three-tailed banner of flaming silk, called the oriflamb of St. Denis, which is said to have fallen from Heaven, and was only carried before the sovereign.

“He must be obeyed,” said Bourbon. “Recall! recall!”

The bugle, repeating his order, brought up Bayard.

“How am I to make my acknowledgments to you, my lord?” he cried. “It is little to preserve my life, but you have once more saved France.”

“It is to you, my comrade, that our country owes her safety,” replied Bourbon, grasping his hand. “If this advantage were followed up, we should rid her of these invaders.”

“Then why did you order a recall?”

“It was sounded by the King, not me. But look! is not the enemy forming for battle?”

“Decidedly,” said Bayard, perceiving that numerous columns were occupying the ground before the river.

“He has discovered that our army is close behind me,” answered Bourbon; “and yonder they come.”

“Yes,” cried Bayard, joyously, as dense bodies of men began to deploy over the

plain, on the flank of the town. "There they are! The invasion is over."

Here Francis galloped up, attended by his staff. "We must not push forward so fast, my Lord Constable," he said tartly. "Our forced marches have exhausted the troops, and they must have rest. Ha! my Chevalier! I joy to see you again. It is a good, good day's work to place you in safety."

"I thank you, Sire," answered Bayard; "but it will be a nobler one to destroy the enemy. If we do not press on at once, the favorable moment will be lost."

"We must recover it to-morrow, then," replied Francis; "and Alençon shall begin the attack with the vanguard at day-break."

"I ask leave to remind you, Sire, that, as Constable of France, I alone can claim the privilege of leading the vanguard," said Bourbon.

"It seems to be your privilege to claim everything; *mon frère*," replied Francis. "However, for once, you must give way, for I am under a pledge to Alençon, and will not break it. Come, let us to the castle."

All followed as he rode off, with the exception of Bourbon, who remained stationary.

"*Mon frère ! mon frère !*" he said, half aloud. "Nay, Sir King, we have done with that ; and I know your terms of love too well to trust them. But spur not too hard, or you may be thrown."

"My lord," cried Esme riding up, "I think the enemy is preparing to retreat."

"You are right," answered Bourbon, casting his eye over the hostile camp ; "but as the King will not engage till to-morrow, they must go, if they will. Meanwhile, tell me whether I can do aught for

your advantage, for I owe you some acknowledgment. I would I could keep you among my own retainers."

"If so, my lord, consider that you have enrolled me, for my service with the King has ceased, and I desire nothing so much as to enter yours."

"Then we are agreed," said Bourbon. "No more now, but rest to-night in my quarter."

Night set in before the several divisions of the French army could effect a junction. They were then ordered to bivouac on the ground, in which course, judging from numerous watch-fires, they were imitated by the enemy, though Bourbon remained of opinion that Nassau intended to retire.

Next morning Francis rose with the dawn, after sleeping in the open air, and was soon surrounded by the principal officers, reporting the mortifying intelligence that Nassau

had effected a retreat, and with such adroitness that hardly a vestige of his camp remained. As the King was giving orders for a pursuit, a courier approached and presented him with a sealed packet.

"This is sad tidings," he said gravely, after perusing it: "but what we have long expected. The Queen is dead!"

Exclamations of sympathy broke from the persons around, and more than one murmured a prayer for the good Queen's soul.

"You, too, seem to have heavy news, cousin," said Francis to Bourbon, "for your black look imports as much."

"Your highness reads it aright," answered Bourbon. "You and France have lost a Queen, and I am threatened with the loss of my duchy. Your serene mother has discovered that it belongs not to me, but to her."

And, regardless of the muttered wonder

his words elicited from the circle around, he turned a disdainful glance on Francis, and strode away. A few rapid steps brought him to Esme.

"Now, to horse!" he said. "Make all haste to Paris, and give this ring, as a token, to my Secretary Lurey. Tell him 'THE TIME HAS COME!'"

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

Book the Second.

MIGHT AGAINST RIGHT.

THE FIRST AND SECOND PARTS.

THE FIRST PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON, ESQ.
BY JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.
IN TWO VOLUMES. A NEW EDITION.
LONDON: Printed by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.

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Shewn the Second.

THOMAS AGASSIZ, THOMAS

JOHNSON, ESQ.

CHAPTER I.

Love bears within its breast the very germ
 Of change ; and how should this be otherwise ?
 That violent things more quickly find a term
 Is shown through nature's whole analogies :
 And how should the most fierce of all be fixed ?

BYRON.

No sooner had Francis and his army quitted Rheims, than the Duchess d'Angoulême repaired to Paris, and fixed her abode at the Louvre.

A few weeks had elapsed, and Louise was seated, one morning, in a chamber of the palace, at a little distance from a recess formed by a window, in which sat Corinna and Mademoiselle de Pisselieu, with another maid of honour, named Adèle Brissac.

Louise was conversing in low but earnest tones with her daughter, Marguerite de Valois, Duchess of Alençon, but better known to posterity by a later title.

In person, Marguerite was a brilliant reflection of Louise. Her beauty, however, was of a softer, as well as higher character ; and full, dark eyes, at once tender and animated, rendered the expression and general effect of her face more feminine. So faultless was her form, that she had acquired the name of the Fourth Grace ; and a mind harmonizing with these charms, and mirrored in many productions of its own, won her the appellation of the Tenth Muse. To rare endowments she united the most amiable and engaging qualities. In an age of universal license, her conduct was irreproachable ; and she forsook the pleasures and gaiety of the Court for the society of learned men, encouraging them as much by this distinction

as by her munificent bounty. Imbued with profound sentiments of religion, her piety was never obtrusive, but was seen chiefly in that divine trait which “covers a multitude of sins ;” and, though an orthodox Catholic, she frequently encountered personal hazard to protect the advocates of the Reformed Faith, at this time exposed to fearful persecution. She saw no attraction in power, except as a means of doing good ; and her unbounded influence over Francis was exercised only for the relief of the oppressed, and the advantage of her country.

“ It is not of the poor Queen I would speak, Madam,” she said, in reply to an observation from Louise ; “ but an affair of greater urgency—a painful one to me ; and not less so, I am sure, to you.”

“ In that case, I must beg you not to broach it,” said Louise, coldly ; “ I am sufficiently harassed already.”

“ Were I silent, Madam, you could not remain long ignorant of what is the talk of all Paris. Nor dare I look on, and hear and see what passes, without warning my loved mother of the dangers around us.”

“ You allude to the thousand-and-one reports about Bourbon, I suppose? Is it possible, Marguerite, that such idle things can alarm you?”

“ True or false, they show the subject of all men’s thoughts, and therefore cannot be termed idle, especially as they refer to such eminent persons as yourself and the Constable. Duty constrains me to tell you, the claim you assert to the Duchy of Bourbon is denounced in the public streets by people of every condition; and that, while your name is coupled with severe reflections, the wildest schemes of vengeance are attributed to the Duke. These, my mother, are not matters to be despised.”

“Do you mean his vengeance, or the public scandal?” said Louise, carelessly.

“Both ; but, waving the last, think what peril we incur in making so wide a breach between him and the King. The removal of such a pillar may endanger the throne.”

“You greatly overrate his power. It depends chiefly on the Barons ; and the clamour he raised against their rights of seignory has estranged them from him. A few, indeed, from mere habit, still cling to him ; but, as soon as we can produce evidence of his designs, they too will come over to us.”

“You are speaking only of courtiers, who would abandon the King, if the tide turned, as readily as they have him. He has powerful Barons for vassals, bound to him both by interest and affection. These you will never bring over.”

“But they are known, and watched so

close, that the Government is informed of their lightest action. We are even aware that, some weeks ago, he dispatched a messenger from the army, to assemble his principal friends in Paris ; and, from the difficulties thrown in the way, they have not yet been able to reach it. Judge, then, if there is any ground for uneasiness."

"I cannot deny that your precautions are wise ; but they will prove ineffective. Bourbon is no ordinary antagonist, and, however his resources are curtailed, remains formidable. In the Commons alone he possesses a host. He has many adherents in the army, exclusive of personal followers, forming the flower of the troops. In a word, he can at any time raise a revolt at home, while the King is engaged in foreign war."

"That danger, too, has been foreseen, my prudent Marguerite," said Louise with a complacent smile. "Intelligence has arrived,

that the armistice I told you of was concluded yesterday ; and the King is expected in Paris before night. He will then treat with the Emperor's commissioners for a permanent peace."

"What you tell me, Madam, may defer the collision ; but, be assured, there is only one way of avoiding it. Justice points out the course to be pursued, when your claim has so long slept ; and gratitude impels me to intercede with you for Bourbon. Knowing how I differ with you, I approach the subject with reluctance ; but the great services he has rendered France—the obligations he has imposed on the King—his attachment to the Crown, and his noble character demand from me this consideration. I trust, my appeal will not be made in vain."

"You are a child," cried Louise angrily.

"Were all you say true, his services have

been liberally, even munificently rewarded. Would you have me forego my revenge?"

"Yes. It is a passion unworthy of my gracious mother."

"It is life to me — hope, everything!" exclaimed Louise vehemently. "No ; I will not forego it. Rather would I pour out my heart's blood ! And you would abandon the duchy, too,—my right and inheritance, as certified by the ablest lawyer in France."

"By the judge who decides the cause, you mean, Madam," said Marguerite, mournfully. "Alas ! is this justice ?"

"You had better appear in court as his advocate," cried Louise, with a furious glance. "If scandal speak true, you would have wished to be his wife."

Marguerite's face was suffused with a deep blush, in which anger mingled with shame, but filial love forbade retort.

"I entertain no sentiments towards him

that do not become me," she said. "As a child of France I must venerate her soldier; and leave your grace to consider whether I have spoken unreasonably."

Louise suffered her to retire without reply; and for a few minutes remained lost in reflection. Arousing herself, she summoned Corinna.

"Padre Stephano has informed you, I suppose, that you are no longer a captive," she said, as the fair hostage presented herself.

"He has, Madam," answered Corinna, "but was unable to tell me any particulars, and I am afraid from this unexpected occurrence, that my father's illness has increased."

"Do not alarm yourself on that account. You owe your emancipation to a more agreeable circumstance, though, I may mention privately, you only exchange one bondage for another."

Corinna looked perplexed.

“You do not understand me,” pursued Louise, in her most insinuating tones. “Tell me,”—and she fixed a searching glance on the young girl—“is there no cavalier whom you have thought of endowing with your heart? — the treasure our sex so often barter for misery and neglect!”

“None, Madam,” replied Corinna, covered with blushes.

“Are you sure?” cried Louise, in surprise and with marked emphasis. “Do you answer me frankly?”

“Believe me, Madam, I do,” said Corinna.

“I am rejoiced to hear it; for I apprehended from the rumours abroad, that you entertained a partiality for one you have met in France—a needy adventurer, named Noel.”

“Is it possible such a thing could be reported?” asked Corinna.

“It is mere Court gossip, and, now that I know the truth, it shall be effectually contradicted. Nay, compose yourself. The affair is too ridiculous to be treated seriously, and should rather excite your mirth. It probably originated with Noel himself, but his fine dreams will soon come to an end. He is now engaged in a plot against the King, which will assuredly bring him to the scaffold.”

An expression of dismay rose to Corinna's lips, but the flashing eye of Louise prevented its utterance.

“Enough of him!” she resumed. “Do you feel no curiosity respecting the engagement you are about to enter?”

“I have not clearly understood your grace,” answered Corinna.

“Certainly, I appear to have completely mystified you,” smiled the Duchess, “yet my tidings may be made plain enough.

Your father's ransom has been paid ; and your kinsman, Count Strozzi, may be expected here every hour, to convey you to Madrid. Arrived there, he is to be rewarded with your hand."

Corinna changed colour, but made no remark.

"This news has discomposed you, I see," resumed Louise more kindly. "Take a stroll on the terrace, and recover yourself. The *maitre d'hôtel* shall see everything arranged for your departure."

It was with faltering steps that Corinna reached the garden, a prey to the most depressing thoughts. The prospect of a union with Strozzi made her sensible, for the first time, that she was not indifferent to Esme, and thus rendered her situation more completely miserable. But, though the Count appeared every moment more odious, duty and principle alike opposed her growing

preference for the Englishman. It was not till after a severe struggle that they triumphed.

Full of sad forebodings, she entered a grove of tall and umbrageous limes, when she suddenly encountered the King, who with a contempt for display habitual to him, had come unattended from the camp, and, alighting at a private postern, was proceeding across the gardens to the palace.

"Ah! my Lady Mirandola!" he cried, "I am fortunate to meet you alone. It was to see you that I have hastened to Paris."

"Indeed, Sire," murmured Corinna in accents of alarm, for she had been much harassed by his gallantries.

"Yes, I have thought of you often since I saw you last, when your cruelty drove me distracted. You remember, I could not prevail on you to share even one coranto."

“I was much pained that I could not obey your commands, Sire ; and, therefore, felt assured that you would graciously excuse me.”

“Ah ! why say commands, when my earnest entreaties were refused ? But I come not to reproach, but to sue. This time, I trust, my request will be granted.”

“My liege !”

“Wherefore so pale, dearest Lady ? Yet I could wish your cheeks were always thus, had I never seen them blooming : then their loveliness is transcendant !”

“These compliments distress me, Sire ; I am sure, therefore, you will not continue them.”

“Inexorable beauty ! But I will no longer offer homage which you scorn. It shall remain buried in my heart, enslaved by your charms, and robbed by you of its cheerfulness. Yet hear my last request : you must not deny me that.”

Corinna turned a supplicating glance upon him, but instantly dropped her eyes, and was silent.

“Now, you are relenting, I hope,” continued Francis, “and the moment may be favorable to my suit; but do not suppose that it is so momentous—at least to you, for I confess it is of much importance to myself.”

“Your highness may command me in all things, as far as my poor ability extends,” said Corinna, without looking up.

“Then I beg you to remain in Paris a few weeks longer. You have hitherto seen it at disadvantage—the Court in mourning, and myself continually absent. For the future, I promise one round of diversions and revels.”

“You are most generous, Sire, but you ask what it is not in my power to grant. My heart is at the bed side of my father, and there alone I can be happy.”

“Do you refuse my invitation—my entreaty?”

“Pardon me, my liege,” said Corinna imploringly. “I dare not neglect the summons of my father, were it ever so unwelcome. I should be even now preparing to depart, and so take my leave of your highness.”

“Not yet! not yet, dear lady!” said Francis, and, unexpectedly seizing her arm, she was surprised into a cry.

A footstep was heard, and they were confronted by Esme.

“Ha!” exclaimed Francis, affecting not to recognise him; “who is this? How dare you, Sir, enter the private gardens of the palace? Begone!” and he half drew his sword.

Esme’s heightened colour foreboded a retort, but he checked himself.

“I obey your highness,” he said. “You,

Madam, have nothing to fear, as the Duchess of Alençon, I perceive, is approaching."

"Marguerite!" muttered Francis, discerning her in the vista. "You shall answer for this insolence another time, Sir." And, turning into the opposite walk, the trees hid him from view, though not before he had been espied by his sister.

"Oh! fly," said Corinna to Esme, "or you are lost. I see the Duchess is followed by her mother, and my kinsman, Strozzi."

"It is too late," answered Esme; "they are here."

The words were scarcely spoken, when Louise stepped up.

"What man is this, Madam?" she demanded of Corinna. "But I need not ask. You have dissembled with me, and are here to meet the traitor, Noel."

"Noel!" exclaimed Strozzi, glaring fiercely at the Englishman. "Leave him to me,

your grace. I will call the guard, and have him secured."

"Forbear, Sir," said Marguerite. "This cavalier," and she exchanged a rapid look with Esme, "is not the traitor you take him for, but one for whom I will be responsible. Say, Rowland, what has happened, for, unless I mistake, some one called for help?"

"It was so, Madam," said Corinna, timidously. "I was seized with a sudden alarm, which I could not resist, but am now ashamed of."

"And the cry brought this gentleman to your assistance?" smiled Marguerite. "Ay, ay. There needs no further explanation. You may retire now, Rowland."

Stealing a glance at Corinna, Esme hurried away, and, making for the gate by which he had obtained admission, through the favor of an old comrade, who was captain of the guard, effected his escape from the gardens.

CHAPTER II.

I gave myself over for a dead man, seeing the horrid fright the necromancer was in. The boy placed his head between his knees, and said, "In this posture will I die; for we shall all surely perish." I told him that all those demons were under us, and what he saw was smoke and shadow.

BENVENUTO CELLINI.

IN a turret of the Louvre, converted by the Duchess d'Angoulême into an observatory, the glimmering light of a lamp fell on a venerable-looking man, having a worn and pallid countenance, from which a long white beard descended to his bosom. He was strangely attired, in a black robe, girded by a zone of silk, wrought with hieroglyphics; and an amulet, enclosing a sacred relique, hung by a chain of gold from his neck. His

lofty forehead leant on a thin, bony hand, and his elbow was resting on a black book, of remarkably antique appearance, and clasped with iron, of which it was currently reported, among the credulous, that the leaves were formed of dead men's skin, inscribed with characters of blood.

The table was covered with a confused array of telescopes, crucibles, cylinders, and other chemical and astronomical instruments, mingled with cabalistic parchments, and rare manuscripts, containing secrets which the art of Caxton was never to divulge. Nor was the chamber deficient in more startling features. Odious reptiles were exposed to view, swimming in huge bottles; and a stuffed serpent was twisted along the floor, having the semblance of life. Opposite was a skeleton, holding in its grisly hand a javelin; and behind the astrologer's seat, curtains veiled a necromantic mirror—

a favorite agent of the reigning Magi, who, by long practice, had brought their art to amazing perfection, insomuch that it would be impossible to credit the relations handed down, of the feats they performed, though resting on otherwise unquestionable authority, if modern science had not made known the mysteries of natural magic, then heightened by the marvellous aids of ventriloquism, optic illusion, and every kind of jugglery.

The old man was apparently absorbed in reading a manuscript, spread out before him, when the Duchess d'Angoulême entered, and, supposing herself unobserved, regarded him for some moments in silence.

"My daughter," cried the Astrologer, at length, without raising his eyes, "what seek you?"

Louise started.

"I am in trouble, Agrippa," she said.

“Your predictions daunt me ; and I come to ask if you may not, by some inadvertence, have been led into error.”

“Impossible,” replied Cornelius Agrippa. “Surely, you must be sensible from the past, that my calculations never err.”

“It is true. But admitting your skill—which, indeed, I cannot doubt—you may in this case, wish to deceive me.”

“Am I an impostor, or a hireling, that I should fabricate lies ?” cried Agrippa, with warmth. “Am I wont to pervert the noble art I profess to such base and sordid purposes ? See, my daughter, how unjust are your suspicions, springing from the corruption of our self-willed nature, so bent on its own inclinations, that the warnings of Heaven itself appear interested !”

“Not so. Heaven seems to sanction my cause ; for everything invites me to pursue it. You alone urge me to desist.”

“ I !” exclaimed Agrippa. “ Do you take me, then, for Fate ? Do I declare my own judgment, or that of the immutable stars ? Daughter, you are unreasonable ; and expect me not to interpret, but to change Destiny.”

“ This is not what I require ; but I know your opinions to be favourable to Bourbon, and your prediction accords with them. I do not forget that you are under obligations to him—light ones, I admit, compared with those you owe me, your mistress and protector ; but still you may be swayed by them. You say, inclination blinds me ; may it not have the same effect on yourself ?”

“ No ; for when I contemplate those divine luminaries, I feel none—remember none. Looking on their prodigious revolutions, I forget myself—who am less than an atom, smaller than a speck. Then I see the fool-

ishness of man's wisdom—the meanness of his greatness. Think you, when my eyes read the fearful handwriting, in those vast and stupendous chambers, that they can be dazzled by earthly grandeur? When my heart and soul quake with consternation, can I imagine a lie?”

“Still ——”

“In short,” interrupted Agrippa, “you are still incredulous. What you wish you will believe: all that is distasteful, reject. This it is to be human!”

“Dread man!” cried Louise, awed by his solemn manner: “will you not help me? It is little to foresee dangers, if you cannot avert them—or will not!”

“These are beyond my power; but, though not to be controlled, they may be shunned. You doubt me! Have you courage to test my words—to hear them confirmed from BENEATH!”

“What do you mean?” said Louise, becoming deadly pale.

“I will summon a spirit,” answered Agrippa; “and, by a potent spell, enforce him to say what will happen.”

The Duchess trembled violently, and for a moment was speechless.

“Call him!” she then said, in a tremulous voice. “I will listen.”

Agrippa arose, and, throwing some herbs into a furnace, in front of the mirror, the chamber was filled with a rich fragrance. The light afforded by the lamp grew dim, and then gradually assumed a blue tint, heightening the ghastly effect of the objects around. Louise’s terror increased, as Agrippa, planting himself before the furnace, pronounced some mystic words, waving his wand to and fro; on which a column of smoke shot up, and quickly clearing away, discovered on the curtain

of the mirror the hideous figure of a demon.

“Horror!” screamed Louise, burying her face in a scarf.

“Fear not, and you are safe,” whispered Agrippa. “What would you learn first?”

The Duchess made a scarcely audible reply.

“Do I hear you aright?” said Agrippa, amazed. “Why, if you think of espousing him, are you so bent on his ruin?”

Louise was silent.

“Strange, inscrutable woman!” murmured the Philosopher: and, raising his wand, he cried—“Speak, Spirit! Shall Louise of Savoy become the wife of Charles de Bourbon?”

“Does the eagle mate with the kite?” replied the Demon, in tones that made Louise shudder:—“the Lion with the fox? Not more possible is this conjunction!”

“Will she succeed in her other designs?” inquired Agrippa.

“Fate has pronounced them accursed. They will blast both herself and her race.”

“By whose hand?” demanded Agrippa.

“Behold!” cried the Demon, vanishing.

As Louise involuntarily looked up, the curtain flew aside, disclosing through a cloud of silvery vapour, the dark framework of the mirror, in the centre of which stood an apparition of Bourbon. So perfect was the resemblance—so life-like the form and aspect, that Louise could hardly believe that it was not the Constable himself.

“Traitor! perjurer!” she cried, fear giving way to rage, “is it you who threaten? Fool! I laugh at your plots, though the fiend himself should aid them! Ay, frown if you will! but you shall find me as stern as yourself. I will either be your wife or your evil genius.” And, without speaking to Agrippa, she flung out of the room.

CHAPTER III.

Oh ! think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots and their last fatal periods.

ADDISON.

GREAT was the excitement in Paris, as the day approached for deciding, by course of law, whether Bourbon was to retain possession of the broad territories and princely revenues of his duchy, or surrender them to the Duchess d'Angoulême.

Circumstances were not favorable to a demonstration of public opinion on the question. Ever since the accession of Louis XI., the citizens had gradually become more and more enslaved—more apathetic, more helpless ; and withal, were so accustomed to suffer themselves from the excesses of arbi-

trary power, that sympathy was not easily aroused by a persecution of their superiors. Indeed, the Barons were more odious from their rapacity and tyranny than the Government itself; and the Rights of Seignory, which invested them with enormous privileges, and almost irresponsible authority, constituted the greatest grievance of the people. From this system arose a state of society which surpasses the imagination of more civilized times. Murders, assassinations, robberies, and abductions were perpetrated in the open day, in the most public streets of Paris; and the most notorious offenders escaped unpunished. Police there was none; justice was a name; and the very office of judge was bought and sold. There was no security for property—but little for life; and, in fact, the united oppression of the King, Barons, and Clergy, almost deprived life of value.

It was at this moment of national disorganization that Bourbon had stepped forward as the protector of the Commons, to whom his heroic character, love of justice, and profuse generosity had already endeared him. From being a favorite, he became their idol; and, when the tide of persecution set in, his wrongs were more canvassed than their own. In spite of long habits of sufferance—in defiance of a large armed force, which constantly patrolled the streets, they grew bold in his cause, and more than one troop of soldiers felt the effects of their resentment. If these attempts at riot were insignificant, public opinion was seen more plainly in the portentous murmurs of immense mobs, dispersing without resistance on the first appearance of the authorities, to assemble the next moment in another place, and, from the order and unanimity that pre-

vailed, it was clear that they were ranged under able leaders. Bourbon, by the King's command, remained with the army on the frontier of Flanders ; and all persons known to be in his interest were beset with spies, who made the Government acquainted with their every movement.

Such was the position of affairs, when, one evening, soon after dusk, some four or five persons were lounging in a cabaret, which rejoiced in the sign of the Dolphin, and was situated in that part of the capital called the *Ville de Paris*. They were conversing with the host, who, as well as his daughter, a coquettish grisette, sought to entertain them, at one and the same time, with good liquor, and the news of the day.

"It's all stuff, Pierre Leroux," said the host, "and no one in his senses would believe it. The Constable marching on Paris ! Ah !

mon ami, this intelligence, I trow, was devised, like my jerkin and doublet, at your own board."

"*Morbleu!*" cried a roguish-looking *batelier*, with a wink at the grisette, "this is a perfect wonder. I have heard of tidings being borne by a pigeon, but it is new to have them from a goose."

"*Diable!* do you dare to doubt my word?" cried the tailor, in a furious tone.

"Not your word, but your invention, gossip," replied the host.

"I tell you, it is the common talk of Paris, and is believed by every one," affirmed the tailor, snappishly.

"I know better than that," cried a butcher; "for I heard quite another story to-night, as I came along; and what's more, folks say it's true." He paused to frown at the *batelier*, who was becoming somewhat tender with the grisette; and then added,

“To your health, Mistress, and wishing you a good husband.”

“You find her *killing*, I warrant you, master butcher,” cried the *batelier*, with a second wink.

“Ha! ha! I cry you mercy, good gallants,” laughed the damsel; “but you will make me something presently.”

The butcher was meditating a furious retort on the *batelier*, when a stranger, muffled in a long brown cloak, stepped up to the counter.

“A fair even to you, Sir Host,” he said, “I come to sup with the Abbé d’Houmont.”

“Monsieur l’Abbé awaits you, Sir,” replied the host. And, admitting him behind the counter, he whispered, “*Will you sup in the cloak?*”

“*To sup is the cloke,*” answered the stranger.

While these words passed, the grisette adroitly diverted the attention of the bystanders, with the exception of a clownish-looking peasant, whom she deemed unworthy of notice. Five other guests arrived, and were received in the same way, and, after an interchange of whispers, conducted to an inner room. This number appeared to be all that were expected; for the host, who had previously been somewhat restless, now became easy again, and rejoined the circle round his daughter.

“Good!” muttered the seeming peasant, who was a sergeant-de-ville, in disguise: “six men to sup with the Abbé d’Houmont, all muffled in cloaks, and giving a password.”—And he slunk out of the cabaret.

Meanwhile, the mysterious guests had entered a private apartment, accessible only by a secret passage, approached through by what appeared to be a cask of wine, but

which a concealed spring opened like a door. Here they were received by Lurcy, Bourbon's secretary.

"One, two, three—six!" he said, as the last person entered; "we are all here, now."

"All," cried the Count de St. Vallier; "and I, for one, am impatient to learn what you have to tell us."

"First, let us be certain that there is no chance of our being interrupted," said the Seigneur de Lalières; "for it has taken me more than a week to elude my spies, and I cannot be sure now that they have not followed me."

"It is impossible, if you attended to my directions," said Lurcy.

"I confess, such a round would bewilder a ferret," laughed Lalières; "but it is said, that a watch has been placed on every house of entertainment, and therefore they may have observed us coming in."

“Well, the Abbé d’Houmont and his guests will be forthcoming, if required,” said Lurcy. “They arrived yesterday.”

“Ho ! ho !” and there was a general laugh.

“Let us be serious awhile,” said St. Vallier. “Lurcy, you have heard from my Lord Constable ?”

“Yes. He directed me to call you together, and announce his intention to take up arms, if any attempt is made to infringe his rights. I am to ascertain whether you will support him.”

“With my last drop of blood,” exclaimed St. Vallier.

“And I !”—“and I !” cried Lalières and Autun, together.

“I will live or die with him,” said the Seigneur Tausannes.

“In short, we are all of one mind,” observed Matignon, the Seneschal of Normandy. “But, I confess, as far as I can

judge, this proceeding is quite uncalled for ; and, to me, the Constable's determination appears premature. The cause is not yet decided, and may be given in his favor."

"I am precisely of your opinion," remarked the Seigneur d'Argouges. "When his right is so clear, why should we doubt that it will be allowed?"

"Because the judge is his personal enemy," said Lurcy.

"More than that," cried St. Vallier: "it was with this judge that the pretended claim of the Duchess d'Angoulême originated, and so it has already secured a verdict."

"But his lordship can appeal to the King," urged D'Argouges.

"As a minister of peace," observed Autun, "I would counsel that course, if experience did not show that it would be perfectly useless. We know how the King has treated him."

"It is the reproach of our country," remarked Tausannes.

"Then, what are we to do?" said the Seneschal Matignon, uneasily. "Revolt?"

There was a pause.

"I only require you to prepare, my Lord," Lurcy then said. "I am to assure you, from the Constable himself, that before he resorts to force, every effort shall be made to preserve peace. You are not asked to strike, but to arm."

"I am satisfied," replied Matignon. "This is but reasonable."

"Our first care must be to secure the Commons," resumed Lurcy. "They are well enough disposed: but will only take arms on condition that great privileges are accorded them, in a written engagement from the Constable. Here lies our greatest difficulty."

"How?" inquired St. Vallier.

“The unwashed rascals, I suppose, ask too much ;” observed d’Argouges.

“No wonder,” returned Lalières. “Jacques Bonhommie could swallow a whale.”

“It is not that,” said Lurey ; “but they require the charter to be under his lordship’s hand and seal. A trusty messenger has been despatched to him, and will doubtless procure it ; but, meanwhile, the leaders of the Commons grow impatient. They expect to receive it to-morrow night, when they will assemble at the quarry, and I fear from the difficulty incurred in communicating with his lordship, that it will not arrive.”

“In that case, you must only put them off,” said Matignon, shrugging his shoulders.

“But they think that I am trifling with them, and it is necessary that some noble person, known to be in my lord’s interest, should attend, and assure them that their demands shall be conceded.”

“And who will fulfil this mission?” asked D’Argouges. “I do not care for the danger it involves, but, having no eloquence, cannot pretend to it.”

“If eloquence is essential, who so fit as my Lord Bishop?” said Matignon, with a slight sneer.

“We will not cavil about it, my lords,” cried St. Vallier. “I have no gift of words, but my noble suzerain shall not want a representative. I will undertake the task.”

“And, to show that I would not shrink from it, I will accompany you,” said the Bishop of Autun.

“Let us consider, then, what is to be said to them,” suggested Lurcy.

While this was passing, the host and his daughter, who had gradually got rid of their company, were surprised by the entrance of a sergent-de-ville.

“Ah! Monsieur! the honour of this visit

overwhelms me," said the host, with a profound bow.

"Silence," replied the sergeant, presenting a pistol. "You have in your house six persons, who have come to sup with the Abbé d'Houmont?"

"Monsieur is right, and a merry set they are, as ever entered a cabaret. Just listen, Monsieur!" As he spoke a loud burst of merriment was heard.

"Mark me," said the officer. "The cabaret is surrounded by musketeers. Not a mouse can leave it. Now, to save your own neck, confess that this supper is a *ruse de guerre*; and your pretended guests, conspirators."

"Conspirators! Monsieur will kill me with fear. If you do but know the Abbé d'Houmont—"

"I am his parishioner, and know him well."

"You shall be satisfied, then, Monsieur. But you will pardon my preceding you to the room, as his guests are students of the University."

"Students of treason, more likely. You are practising a trick upon me."

"Monsieur can judge for himself," returned the host, drawing back. "I would only avoid bloodshed, if it could be done."

"Lead on," said the sergeant. "If treachery is attempted, I will blow out your brains."

Notwithstanding this threat, it was with manifest reluctance that he followed the obsequious host. From their number and desperate character, the students of Paris had become too powerful for the ordinary officers of the law; and, being subject to no jurisdiction but that of the colleges, committed the most flagrant crimes with impunity. An affront offered to one was taken

up and avenged by the whole body, and only a short time had elapsed since the Mayor of Paris having ordered a student to be hanged for murder, had been compelled to make a public atonement for his offence, walking in solemn procession through the city to kiss the murderer's corpse.

In the chamber which the host entered, seven persons were seated at a table, garnished with a goodly array of goblets and stoups of wine, mingled with the relics of a feast. The party was of a most heterogeneous description, the jovial-looking Abbé having invited no two guests of the same country, so that, lolling in his presidential chair, he was saluted in one breath with the varied accents of England, Germany, and Spain, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

"Pardon me, brave gentlemen and most reverend Abbé," cried the host, "but here

is one would speak with you—a sergeant de ville.”

“A sergeant de ville!” exclaimed the German. “Turn him out of your house, gossip!”

“Kick him out!” said the Englishman.

“Throw him out of the window!” cried the Welshman.

“Break his bones!” roared the Irishman.

“Canna’ you fetch him a box o’ the lug, man?” drawled the Scot.

“Stab him!” cried the Spaniard.

“Roast him!” said the Abbé.

“But he is your parishioner, Monsieur l’Abbé,” interposed the host; “and has the honor of your reverence’s acquaintance.”

“Oh! that’s another thing,” said the German.

“Entirely,” said the Irishman.

“Altogether,” agreed the Abbé. “Let him enter.”

“I thank you, Monsieur l’Abbé,” said the sergeant, respectfully, as he stepped in. “Now that I see you I am satisfied, and could not for a moment doubt the honest intentions of your brave guests. It is company of another stamp I seek. Each man wore a cloak, and gave a password as he entered.”

As these words were uttered, the Abbé’s six guests sprang up, disclosing on the back of every chair a brown cloak, which they instantly wrapped round their persons.

“Now for the password!” cried the Abbé. “*Will you sup in the cloak?*”

“*To sup is the cloke,*” answered the six guests together.

“It is the same,” cried the sergeant. “I ask no more.”

And, before any one could interpose, he vanished from the room.

“By’r Lady, a most subtle invention,”

cried the priest, amidst a peal of laughter.
“Now, more wine, master host; we’ll drink
a health to the good Constable.”

CHAPTER IV.

I tell thee Jack Cade, the clothier, means to dress the Commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap on it.

So he had need, for 'tis threadbare. Well, I say it was never merry world in England since gentlemen came up.

HENRY VI.

ON the brow of a hill at Montmartre, overlooking Paris, was a vast quarry, which, from its wild and gloomy aspect, had the reputation of being haunted. Not even a bramble or a patch of verdure was seen near the spot ; and in a sweep of several miles, there was no trace of human habitation. Wherever the eye turned, all was silent, solitary and dismal.

Emerging for a moment from dark scud-

ding clouds, which seemed ready to fall, the moon shed a feeble light on the scene, showing the figures of two men, so disguised that no one could distinguish their features. They had just gained the ascent, and halted before a tall crag, at the side of the quarry.

"We seem to be in good time, Admiral," said one. "Are you sure that we have come to the right place?"

"It was this spot that D'Argouges named," answered Bonnivet, "and I have no doubt that he has correctly informed me. But we must have a little patience, *mon ami*."

"I cannot be patient with these rascally *bourgeois*, who cheat us all day, and come here to rail against us at night," replied Marshal Lautrec. "Nor, to tell the truth, do I clearly understand why we are pursuing this round about policy, when it would be so easy to bring down a few troopers, and carry the whole batch to prison."

“Precisely the thing we wish to avoid,” rejoined Bonnivet. “Our object is not to scotch the snake but to kill him, and that can only be done by striking at Bourbon.”

“But I thought you had taken measures to intercept young Noel with the Constable’s manifesto ?”

“True ; but to-night’s meeting will give us further information ; and we shall learn who are his friends, and what they intend to do.”

“In my opinion, we should save ourselves a great deal of trouble if one of his demagogues were stretched on the rack.”

“I would not resort to torture when a little finesse renders it unnecessary. Indeed, such a course would frustrate our design, which is to effect a breach between him and the Barons. There are men among them, you are aware, who will not put faith in extorted confessions.”

“Hist!” said Lautrec, suddenly; “there is a light!”

They stepped behind the crag, and shortly afterwards, seven or eight men, lighted by a torch, appeared on the further side, and descended into the quarry. They were soon joined by others, and every moment received fresh accessions, till more than a hundred had assembled. Several of a superior condition arrived on horseback; but few were above the rank of citizens, or farmers; and the light of three or four flambeaux, which flickered in the wind, gleamed on faces still marked with the day’s toil. To these persons, a stout burly-looking bourgeois, whose sleek velvet dress spoke him a man of substance, was an object of especial veneration; and, indeed, the good notary, Pierre Vauban, was even an important person in the eyes of their superiors.

“’Tis a fair sight to see you here, Master

Notary," said Jean Barbezieux, a substantial water-carrier ; "and, I warrant, we shall not lack cunning counsel ; for they would be sharp eyes that could catch you stumbling."

"Ay, I promise you, they won't catch Master Vauban asleep," laughed a grimy charcoal-burner, pleased to find himself in such good company, and ready to agree to anything that might be said.

"For my part, I think we're all asleep, or we should never have come to this pass," said a sturdy farmer. "Let them kill us, if these wrongs are to go on ; for we had far better be dead."

"That's true, forsooth," concurred the charcoal-burner.

"There, hold your peace !" cried the notary Vauban. "You know as much what you are talking of as my stick. Peace, and listen to these worshipful nobles, here, who have come from the Lord Bourbon."

"Bravely spoken, faith," observed the charcoal-burner.

"Hold your tongue, willa'?" growled an herculean blacksmith. "Here's the Count St. Vallier."

"Vive le Comte!" was the general cry, as St. Vallier and the Bishop of Autun rode into the throng.

"Thanks, thanks, my friends!" answered the Count.

"Friends? good!" muttered the charcoal-burner. "This is something, neighbour Colin, to be friends of a Count."

"Willa be still!" growled the blacksmith.

"Do you bring us good news, Noble Count," demanded Henri Dolbert, a wealthy goldsmith. "Worshipful Master Lurey, your servant. I hope to-night will close our bargain."

"The Count will answer you, Master

Dolbert," replied Lurcy. "He stands here for my Lord Duke."

"Yes," said St. Vallier, "I come to greet you in his name—to promise attention to all your wishes. The ties which bound him to you are strengthened. Hitherto, he has been the champion of the oppressed—now he is oppressed himself."

Murmurs broke from the assembly, but instantly subsided.

"He has shed his blood for France," pursued St. Vallier, "devoted to her his strength and wealth; and now, because he will not help to enchain her, he is to be stripped of his birthright. If they do this to *him*, what may be expected for *us*?"

"I know not, indeed," cried Paul de Varons, a sober merchant; "for even now we seem at the worst. It was but yesterday that the Chancellor's minions came to my stores, and carried off ten bags of florins by

force, for the King's use, without a word said or done."

"A pretty pass, truly, when a man's goods are not safe in his own house," cried the smith. "Is not this against the law, Master Notary?"

"The good *Curé* will tell you it is against the Commandments," answered the Notary; "but law is another thing."

"I warrant you," concurred the smith, in a tone more significant than agreeable.

"The law we live under is that of might," resumed St. Vallier. "It is the strong man's arm, and the rich man's gold; but the Lord Constable will make it just and impartial. I speak thus positively, being acquainted with his purpose."

"This is all well, noble Count," cried the notary. "We hold Paris in our hands, and will not despair."

"You have but to secure the city for the

Constable, when he gives the signal," said St. Vallier; "and all you demand shall be yours."

"Softly awhile, noble Count," answered Vauban. "We all love my Lord Constable; but, before we draw the sword, you must show us what it is for. In short, we must have the declaration I have talked of, under his lordship's own hand and seal."

"Do you doubt his plighted word?"

"Not if he were here to pledge it, though even then we should need a writing."

"Ay," said the merchant, "or, when our cause is gained, the Barons may oblige him to neglect us."

"That they could not do, when you had his word," answered St. Vallier.

"But have you not brought us a writing, Count?" inquired the notary. "By Master Lurcy's promise, we were to have one to-night."

“He has done his utmost to procure it.” replied St. Vallier, “and cannot be blamed for the delay. The messenger sent to the Constable has not yet arrived.”

These words were followed by a pause, evincing the disappointment of the assembly, when the silence was suddenly broken by the tramp of a horse, approaching at full gallop. In a moment afterwards, Esme rode up; and made his way to St. Vallier.

“From my Lord Constable, Count,” he cried, presenting a folded paper, “I should have been here before, but was intercepted at the Barrière Blanche, and only escaped by a miracle.”

“Ha!” said St. Vallier. “But we will speak of this anon.” He glanced for a moment at the paper, and then added—“Here, good Vauban, is the declaration you desired. The Constable enumerates your

grievances, and promises to redress them, Listen !”

The document was read, amidst profound silence, succeeded, at the conclusion, by a burst of applause.

“ This is all we need,” cried Vauban, receiving the paper from St. Vallier ; “ and, by'r Lady, it is bravely writ. Here, too, are the good Duke's own hand and seal. Right nobly has he sealed it.”

“ Nay, if it be his own hand, let us all have a sight of it,” cried Bonnivet, in a feigned voice.

The proposal gave general satisfaction, and accordingly the important document was handed round, while the principal leaders conferred for a few moments apart. Their plans being arranged, St. Vallier required it to be given up to Vauban, but, to the consternation of all, it was not to be found.

CHAPTER V.

Justice herself, that sitteth wimpled 'bout
The eyes, doth it not because she will take
No gold, but that she would not be seen blushing
When she takes it: the balances she holds
Are not to weigh the right of the cause, but
The weight of the bribe.

LILLY.

THE Supreme Justiciary Court of France held its sittings at an ancient table, formed of white marble, which stood in the palace of the parliament, and hence the tribunal was designated "The Table of Marble."

On one side, in front of the table, sat the Duchess d'Angoulême, attended by a bevy of maids of honour; and on the other stood Bourbon, with his secretary, Lurey,

and Monthelon, his lawyer. Du Prat, as chancellor, occupied the presidential bench.

The pleadings on both sides had given place to a pause, during which nothing was heard but the low whisperings of the judges, as they conferred with each other, watched anxiously by the spectators, who, though only the nobility and chief courtiers had been admitted, crowded every part of the great hall. Their consultation being ended, a profound silence ensued, which was broken by the deep, sonorous voice of Du Prat.

“The Court has considered this case,” he said. “Her grace, Louise, Duchess d’Angoulême, as representative of the male line of Bourbon-Beaujeu, claims the titles, dignities, lands and revenues appertaining to the late Louis, Duke de Bourbon, now held and enjoyed by Charles de Bourbon, Lord Constable, in right of his wife Suzanne, only child and heir of the said Louis; and

also, as successor of the eldest female line of Bourbon, in right of descent. Louise Duchess d'Angoulême, you are required to answer whether this is your plea?"

"Her grace affirms by me that your lordship's record is true," said the notary, Gierardin,

"The said Charles de Bourbon," resumed Du Prat, "urges, as rejoinder, first, the prior right of his wife Suzanne, and, secondly, the settlement of Duke Louis, sanctioned by our late sovereign lord, Louis the Twelfth—Charles de Bourbon, Lord Constable, you are required to answer whether this is your plea?"

"You have stated it truly, Sir Chancellor," replied Bourbon.

"The judgment of the Court," resumed Du Prat, in less distinct tones, though he darted a vindictive look at Bourbon, "is, that Louise, Duchess d'Angoulême, is the lawful

heir of the late Louis, Duke de Bourbon ; and, accordingly, my Lord Constable is required and commanded to surrender all the titles, dignities, lands, and revenues, aforesaid, formerly held by the said Duke ; and which are henceforward vested for ever in the said Duchess d'Angoulême."

A murmur of surprise, mingled with exclamations, broke from the audience, amidst which Bourbon arose, wearing a look of haughty and stern indifference.

"You have proclaimed your decision, Sir Chancellor," he said. "I have now to make mine."

"Stay, my Lord!" cried Du Prat hesitatingly. "The Court, aware of the hardship of your case, and desirous to prevent further stir in this dispute, recommends the union of the adverse interests, considering that in such a transaction each party should be guided less by inclination, than by con-

cern for the common weal. Being, therefore, so empowered by you, we will make it our humble suit to the Duchess d'Angoulême to merge your joint rights in a contract of marriage."

"On no account would I impose so much trouble upon you," replied Bourbon. "As her grace is to have my estates, they shall go to her unencumbered."

Regardless of the sensation excited by the words, he walked proudly out of the hall without even looking at Louise, whom rage and shame had rendered speechless.

The Count of St. Paul, Bayard, and the veteran Marshal La Palisse hastened to follow him, but were overtaken in the corridor by Bonnivet and Lautrec.

"A word with you, my Lords," cried the Admiral. "I have something very important to communicate."

"It is what will change your minds,

if you are seeking Bourbon," added Lautrec.

"I have heard all you can urge, Marshal," replied Bayard; "and must now tell you plainly, you cannot fasten this quarrel on me."

"Forgive me, Chevalier," said Lautrec; "but am I to think that you will support the demands which Bourbon claims for the Commons?"

"In short, will you aid in pulling down our order, my good Lords?" asked Bonnivet.

"I have told you repeatedly, Admiral, that I do not side with the Constable on this point," answered Bayard. "At the same time, it must be owned that the Commons are grievously ill-used."

"Some of their burdens ought, no doubt, to be reduced," said St. Paul. "This is all my kinsman seeks."

"It had been better not to stir such a question," observed La Palisse. "As it is, the Constable, I am sure, intends only to allay the general discontent, and will not infringe the rights of the Barons."

"So you have said again and again, Marshal," cried Bonnivet, "and I have warned you—conjured you, not to be thus blinded. It is now in my power to make you see the truth, and you shall own yourself mistaken. Read this!"

"And observe, my Lords," said Lautrec, as they took the proffered paper, "it bears the signature and seal of the Constable; and is his own manifesto to the Commons."

"Perdition!" exclaimed St. Paul. "Would he abolish the Rights of Seignory?"

"The Commons to tax themselves!" cried La Palisse. "*Ma foi!* they will soon shift their burdens from their own shoulders to our's."

"The Chevalier is silent," said Bonnivet, "and probably thinks still that the Constable means fairly."

"Do what you will, my Lords," cried Bayard sorrowfully. "I see by this paper that I am not made for Courts, and should not stir in their factions. To-night I shall return to the camp."

"Hark!" said Lautrec. "The Constable has joined his friends."

The tremendous shouts which excited his remark were elicited by Bourbon's appearance in the vestibule, before which a vast crowd had congregated, and were with difficulty kept back by a strong force of soldiers. As the Constable passed to his horse, a man, in the garb of a priest, who had contrived to penetrate the crowd of attendants, sidled up to him.

"They have made you a beggar," he said in a low voice. "Will you listen to me now?"

"The Sieur de Beaurein!" exclaimed Bourbon in astonishment.

"Hush! My august master, the Emperor, has sent me to renew his proposals to you. Shall I follow to your hôtel?"

Bourbon replied in the affirmative, and rode off at the head of his retinue, just as Triboulet, the jester, reached the spot, hoping to hear something which might be acceptable to his intriguing patron, Du Prat.

CHAPTER VI.

Here comes a pair of very strange beasts, which in all tongues are called fools.

Salutation and greeting to you all.

Good, my lord, bid him welcome. This is the motley-minded gentleman that I have so often met in the forest.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

TRIBOULET looked around on every side for the person who had spoken with Bourbon, and whose appearance had excited his suspicions ; but he was nowhere to be seen ; and mentally execrating his ill-fortune, the jester pushed through the crowd towards the Louvre. Arrived there, he proceeded to the lower hall, which was appropriated to the inferior domestics, jabbering to him-

self in the most vehement and excited manner.

Servants of both sexes and every description, from the maître d'hôtel to the scullion, were dispersed around, engaged in their avocations, or sauntering idly about; and on one side was a group consisting of the butler, a portly personage, with a highly inflamed complexion,—the concierge, a prim and antiquated dame, evidently having a great opinion of her own consequence,—and two or three soubrettes. They were listening with eager wonder to the observations of one of those corrupt offshoots of the Church of Rome, called Pardoners, who, at this period, gained an easy, and even luxurious subsistence, by the sale of indulgences, as well as fabricated reliques, and, as Chaucer's deathless verse too clearly testifies, had from their abandoned character long been regarded with disgust by pious

Catholics, though their affectation of sanctity and egregious falsehoods continued to impose on the credulous vulgar.

"These buckles belonged to the blessed St. Francis Xavier," said the Pardoner, taking the article referred to from his open box. "They were worn in his contest with the fiend; and possess the admirable quality of never wearing out. You see, they are as bright as if they were made yesterday. Just look at them, master butler."

"Oh! I see them, holy Pardoner," said the butler, shuffling a pace or two further off. "Our Lady keep us! are these the self-same buckles?"

"The very same," answered the Pardoner. "And you see that black mark there?"

"A sort of scratch, like," said the butler.

"But *more* like a *scorch*," returned the Pardoner ; "for the fiend making a kick at the good Saint, just as he had him down, his toe struck the buckle, quite burning off the polish, and there the mark remains to this day."

"Wonderful!" cried the butler and a majordome together.

The *soubrettes* crossed themselves, and drew closer to the Concierge, who regarded the sacred relique with dignified awe.

"Have no fear of them," said the Pardoner ; "for, owing to their share in the Saint's conflict, nothing evil can ever come where they are—no, not even in limbo ; and any pious purchaser might carry them there in his coffin. They are worth ten crowns, at least."

"Psha!" cried Triboulet, coming up, "you may buy a gold pair for that ; and, by my troth, these look scarcely old enough

for the Saint's. But take them to my cousin, Henry of Navarre ; and see what price he will rate them at."

"I will none of him, or of thee, fool," replied the Pardoner. "Our Lady help us, I say ! for we live in an awful age. Scoffers now may go abroad openly—mouthing their jests at everything good. What say you to this ear-ring, pretty mistress ? It is a rare amulet."

"It belonged, then, to some devout lady, I suppose," replied Minna, whom he had addressed.

"You may well say that," answered the Pardoner, with that condescending smile which implies superior knowledge. "It has dangled in the ear of Eutochia, who was one of the seven Sleepers of Ephesus."

"And pray, who were they, holy Sir ?" inquired Minna.

"Ah !" cried the butler : "it is some wond-

rous history, I warrant you ; for Master Pardoner deals not in common wares."

"Why, it is true, I can tell some strange things," concurred the Pardoner, complacently ; "but there are few tales will match this. In sooth, it might be doubted now-a-days, if it did not rest on good evidence, and, among other things, this very ear-ring is attestation of it. You must know, then, that the Seven Sleepers were Christian virgins, who being ordered by the Emperor Dacian to sacrifice to idols, fled to a cave in mount Celyon, where they fell asleep, and did not wake up till the reign of Theodosian, two hundred and eight years afterwards."

"Wonderful !" repeated the butler and majordome, with their former unanimity.

"More wonderful than true, mayhap," cried Triboulet.

"Again, thou scoffer ?" exclaimed the Pardoner, with a frown. "But to speak

wisdom to thee, is to cast pearls before a hog. If thy wit equalled thy craft, such a miracle would seem a small thing, when greater ones pass before our very eyes."

"Ay, marry!" laughed Triboulet, "when such a rogue as thou canst pass for a saint."

"Say you!" shouted the Pardoner, fiercely.

"Do you deny the miracles?"

"Neither he nor any other can deny them," said the Concierge. "I heard of one last night, in the Faubourg. St. Denis, that is truly marvellous."

"Did you, though?" exclaimed the butler.

"Perchance, 'tis but an old woman's tale," remarked the majordome.

"Old woman's tale, quotha!" said the Concierge, bristling up.

"Old woman's, or old man's, it is true," said the Pardoner; "and I can give you the best relation of it. A drunken wretch, who had gambled away his last sous, coming

up the Rue des Rosiers, cursing and blaspheming, stopped before the shrine of our Lady, and, in his fury, plunged a dagger into the image. Blood spouted forth from the wound, striking him dumb with horror ; and, being taken before the Sorbonne, he confessed his guilt, and is ordered to be burnt."

"Liar !" exclaimed one of the bystanders.

"All started round, and the Pardoner recoiled, thinking the voice supernatural ; but his dark flabby face purpled with rage the next moment, when he discovered the speaker, who was a man of middle age, having a sharp, stern countenance, and grey eyes, beaming with fanatical enthusiasm. One of the primitive converts of the reformed faith, he presented a striking contrast to the unworthy agent of the Church of Rome, whose coarse features were marked in broad and legible characters, with hypo-

crisy and fraud, joined to traces of habitual intemperance.

“Yea, thou knowest it is a lie,” continued the reformer; “and I tell thee that a day is coming, when thy false gods shall be pulled down from their high places, and idolatry rooted out of the land. Persecution may pile her faggots, and the fires of martyrdom be kindled, but the light they give forth, shall show Rome in all her deformity. Woe to the sink of abomination; for her downfall is at hand.”

“Hear you the scoffer—the blasphemer?” exclaimed the Pardoner. “But do I not know him? By’r Lady, yes! it is Le Clerc, the heretic of Meaux. Sergeant! I command you to seize him, in the name of the Syndic Bedier.”

“Take me, take me to him,” cried the enthusiast. “I will defy his tortures; and glory in condemnation.”

"*Peste!*" exclaimed the Sergeant, seizing him by the throat, while a cry of execration burst from the auditors: "this is rank heresy, or I'm a Turk."

"Now, Mr. Sergeant, stand off!" cried a fine athletic fellow, wearing the colours of the Duchess of Alençon. "The stranger is protected by the Duchess, and no one shall molest him."

"Say you so, Clement Marot?" replied the Sergeant, twirling his moustache. "Well, I will not meddle against her grace; but, *parbleu!* I must have satisfaction from you, Sir, *Peste!* we must cross swords before I sleep."

"When you will, Sergeant," rejoined the future poet, coolly.

"It is well," said the son of Mars. "*Morbleu!* I must have blood for this."

"Blood is crying aloud against you, O, Amalek!" shouted Le Clerc. "My voice——"

“Nay, Sir, it must be hushed here,” said Marot. “Come, I must take you away.” And he drew the gossamer out of the hall.

“The lower regions are going distracted,” said Triboulet. “We have war, discord, and heresy, and this pretty lass will make us a perfect pandemonium.”

He threw his arm round Minna, and attempted to kiss her : but a female of Amazonian proportions, grotesquely attired, rushed with a scream between them.

“Ah! villain have I found you? she cried with hysterical vehemence. “Is this the way you treat me? I’ll tear your eyes out, I will.”

And to the amusement and wonder of the bystanders—though no one could be more astonished than Triboulet himself, she handled the jester so roughly, that he called out for mercy, blending his cries with furious exclamations.

"Yes, you're a pretty fellow, truly," cried the Amazon, "to run away from your wife, and swear at her in this manner."

"His wife!" exclaimed Minna. "Are you indeed his wife!"

"His loving and faithful wife, my pretty dear."

"The false varlet! He asked me to marry him."

"Shame! shame!" cried several voices, amidst a peal of laughter.

"What do you all mean?" screamed Triboulet. "Think you, I'd marry such an old hag as this—an outlandish tigress?"

"Fye on you to abuse the poor woman," said Minna.

"Bless your pretty mouth, for saying so," cried the disowned lady. And, seizing her round the waist, she pressed her lips with masculine fervour.

"Help!" said Minna, breaking from him,

and covering her heightened color with a laugh.

“No harm done, my dear,” said the Amazon. “As for you, villain, you think to break my heart, I know ; but I’ll first break your bones.”

“He ought to be tossed in a blanket,” said Minna, “he ought !”

The sentiment was received with applause, and echoed on all sides, which so terrified the jester, that he retreated towards the door. But the fair claimant of his hand arrested him ; and they were surrounded by the servants, laughing and jeering at the luckless Triboulet, till he was almost mad. A blanket was then produced, and, in spite of his entreaties, threats, and curses, he was thrown into it, and tossed in the air. But one of his tormentors dropping his hold, at one corner, he managed, at last, to scramble to the floor, and darted,

amidst roars of laughter, out of the hall. Inquiries were made for his wife; but Barnaby—for it was he who personated Madame Triboulet, had disappeared.

CHAPTER VII.

The man who pauses on the paths of treason,
Halts on a quicksand, the first step engulphs him.

HILL.

IN proceeding from the Court of Justice to the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon, his residence in Paris, the Constable's every thought was occupied by the communication of Beaurein. Loyalty to the Crown, devotion to France, and his high sense of duty, which had induced him to submit to so many provocations, now vanished like a mist from his mind. The headstrong passions aroused in his bosom by this crowning act of injustice knew no restraint, and, setting aside the nobler

sentiments of his nature, they discovered the dawn of that revenge which previously had been seen in dim and flitting glimpses. The last injury had been inflicted on him, and his resolve was taken.

Full of bitter reflections, he reached the hotel, where, in accordance with a previous arrangement, St. Vallier and the Seneschal Matignon were awaiting him.

"The Chancellor has pronounced his decree," he said, in answer to their look of inquiry; "and it is what I expected. They have stripped me of everything."

"Not of your sword," replied St. Vallier, significantly.

"They have left me enough in that to do myself right with," rejoined Bourbon; "and the day has come for righting both myself and France."

"I would shed my best blood in your cause," said Matignon, though he had turned

deadly pale ; “but I counsel you to think well before you draw the sword.”

“I have done so,” answered Bourbon.
“Now I will think no more, but act.”

“I admire your resolution,” cried St. Vallier ; “though it would, in truth, be proper to do nothing rashly. Let us even temporize a little, so as to gain sufficient time to collect your resources. Our enemies will, if they can, prevent your doing so, and for this purpose, I doubt not, will seize your various castles as soon as possible. There is but one way of frustrating their design in our present condition, and you may not consider it an agreeable one.”

“Name it,” said Bourbon.

“Appeal to the tyrant himself, and demand a bed of justice.”

Bourbon coloured, and bit his lip ; but his agitation was only momentary.

“You speak wisely and kindly,” he said ;

“and wherefore should I not follow your advice? Must the dissimulation be all on their side, as well as the wrong? Am I alone to publish my intentions to the world? No! you behold me now, my lords, an altered man—one whose natural character is distorted; no longer confiding and open, but wary, close, and designing. The appeal shall be made to-day, and I will instruct Monthelon to prepare it.”

“This will give breathing time for our preparations,” observed St. Vallier. “The citizens are ripe for revolt, but our arrangements are not matured. Neither can your grace’s vassals be assembled without a month’s delay.”

“But you mean not, surely, to grant the citizens these new privileges that are talked of?” said Matignon. “If so, the Barons will be ruined.”

“I will only grant them what is right,”

returned Bourbon. "As things are, they are worse than slaves. Their labor, property—nay, their very lives are claimed by others ; and they are subject to a hundred masters. I have promised to do them justice, and must keep my word."

"Your sentiments are my own, my lord," said St. Vallier, "and I will steadfastly support your purpose ; but we must bear in mind that it will increase the number of our enemies."

"Be it so," answered Bourbon ; "and I will take care that our friends do not fall short. Let me tell you, for your private ear, that overtures have been made to me from the Emperor."

"Hold, my lord," cried St. Vallier, while an expression of surprise broke from Matignon. "We are interrupted."

The door opened and admitted a page, who, receiving Bourbon's permission, intro-

duced the Lord of Beaurein, in his disguise of a priest ; but perceiving two strangers, the envoy drew back.

“Do not be alarmed,” said Bourbon ; “these are my friends, and you may unfold your mission with safety.”

“It may be so,” answered Beaurein ; “but my life is at stake, and I can only speak with your grace alone.”

“Leave us, then, my lords,” cried Bourbon. “You shall soon know all.”

“I will go to the King,” resolved Maignon, mentally, as he and St. Vallier retired, “and tell him what is passing. This is a secret agent of the Emperor.”

“You can now speak unreservedly,” said Bourbon to Beaurein ; “but I must tell you beforehand that I can only treat with the Emperor as an equal.”

“The compact may be easily concluded,” replied Beaurein, “as I am invested with

unlimited powers. Since I first made proposals to you, our project has become more matured, and we have obtained the adhesion of the King of England. I am empowered to treat with you by him, as well as my august master."

"And the conditions?"

"They vary little from what I urged before. My royal master and the king's grace respectively engage to secure you the crown of France, with the hand of the Emperor's sister, Queen Eleanora of Portugal, in marriage, provided you raised a revolt, and within two months' time, appear with three thousand men-at-arms before Paris."

"I pledge myself to do so, conditionally that the Emperor, within the same period, marches an army on the French possessions in Italy, and thus causes a diversion of the tyrant's forces."

“It shall be done. Is there aught else you would stipulate?”

Some minor arrangements were mooted, leading to further conversation, when the contract of alliance was definitively agreed on, and signed and sealed by both parties.

“I will now make all haste to the Emperor, in Flanders,” said Beaurein. “But pardon me a moment. I never go forth twice in the same disguise.”

Turning the inside of his cassock outwards, it appeared as a Jew’s gown, in which he arrayed himself, and completed his disguise by appending a false beard to his chin. Then, bidding farewell to Bourbon, who could not repress a smile, he departed.

At the gate of the hotel, he was suddenly surrounded by a party of musketeers, who all grappled him at once; but without

offering any resistance, he loaded them with abuse, in the jargon and accents of a genuine Israelite.

“Hold!” cried an officer, laughing. “It is a priest we are to look for. Let Moses adrift.”

Beaurein was accordingly set at liberty, and moved off, amidst the jeers of the soldiers, whom he continued to execrate as long as he could be heard.

CHAPTER VIII.

They did not know how hate can burn
In hearts once changed from soft to stern ;
Nor all the false and fatal zeal
The convert of revenge can feel.

SIEGE OF CORINTH.

ON returning to the Louvre, after the public refusal of her hand by Bourbon, Louise of Savoy sought her closet, being desirous both to avoid observation, and meditate measures of revenge.

Wild and overpowering were the feelings awakened in her bosom, from shame, mortification, and wrath. Her expected triumph had proved a humiliation, and victory had loaded her with dishonour. She found no satisfaction in the unjust decree of Du Prat,

though endowing her with the government and revenues of whole provinces—since it failed to bend or humble Bourbon. He to whom she had knelt—sacrificing pride, ambition, self-respect, still met her advances with disdain, preferring indigence and obscurity to all the wealth, honours, and powers her hand could bestow.

Hatred—deep, relentless hatred, of the man she had so basely injured, now became her ruling sentiment; and reflection rather strengthened, than mollified the feeling. But it brought with it a self-inflicting retribution, representing continually the marked contrast between her own character and his; and she was reminded every moment of his superiority, and her debasement.

These bitter thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Francis.

“I have come to congratulate you on your success, Madam,” he said; “and I do so with

more pleasure, as Bourbon's renewed insolence must entirely have estranged your regard."

"You have heard it, then!" exclaimed Louise, her face flushing with rage. "But, yes! it is now the talk of all Paris—the jest of every unwashed churl and babbling slut. Yet I live, and have my senses; and am not avenged."

"Is it not revenge to reduce your enemy to beggary, and enrich yourself with the spoil? What more can you require?"

"His blood," answered the Duchess, in a tone that made Francis shudder.

"Nay, I will not consent to that; and, to say the truth, I think we have gone too far already. You start, Madam; but really we must act with great caution in this business. Bourbon will probably send me a formal appeal against the Chancellor's judgment, so couched as to oblige me, in vindication of

my honour, to grant his demand of a bed of justice; and it may even be found expedient to give him back part of his possessions."

"Rash, misguided man, you surely cannot meditate such a purpose. I will not dwell on the insults he has offered you, in my person; but for the sake of your own peace—nay, for your safety, I charge you to beware. Remember who it is you have provoked—I may say, to desperation. Look for him in the assassin's dagger, in the poisoned banquet, and on that pillow which he will make one of thorns. Your very dreams should be of Charles de Bourbon."

"Be assured, Madam, I will not make such a bugbear of him."

"Then send him to the *oubliettes* of Loches. The secret information of D'Argouges, and the paper brought off by Bonnivet from Montmartre, furnish sufficient evidence to convict him of treason."

“You are mistaken. It is but his old design against the barons; and, for my part, I should be glad to see their privileges curtailed, though not by his hand. Believe me, I have as little love for him as yourself; but am warned on all sides not to press him too hard.”

“Marguerite is your counsellor,” cried Louise vehemently; “but you will find, when too late, that she is misleading you.”

Here an attendant entered, ushering in the Seneschal Matignon.

“You are surprised, Sire, at my impatience to speak with you,” said the Seneschal; “but it is to denounce a traitorous conspiracy, which endangers the throne.”

And without waiting to be questioned, he informed them of what had passed at the Hôtel de Bourbon, and his belief that the reputed priest was an emissary from the Emperor.

“Now, you will believe me,” said Louise to Francis, in an exulting tone. “If you do not crush the traitor instantly, he will make off to the Bourbonnois, and there can defy you.”

“Let us proceed on safe grounds,” said Francis, shrinking from that contest which his mother sought to hasten; “for, after all we have little here but a few vaunting words, spoken in the heat of passion. As for this priest, you should have waited till he came forth, Matignon, and then arrested him.”

“I have anticipated your commands, my liege, for though I came in all haste to the palace myself, I posted a party near the Constable’s hotel, with instructions to detain the priest till my return.”

“You have done well,” rejoined Francis. “Go, now, and see if he is secured. Meantime, I will order the arrest of St. Vallier.”

“It is Bourbon you should arrest,” cried Louise, as Matignon departed. “Strike the tree at the root, if you would fell it to the ground.”

“I will summon him to attend me, and question him myself,” replied Francis.

Thus speaking, he quitted the room, leaving Louise to resume her reflections.

After an interval of about an hour, he hastily re-entered.

“This wily priest has escaped,” he said ; “and Bourbon has privately gone off, no one knows whither.”

“Unfortunate !” exclaimed Louise. “But send out parties in every direction. Possibly he may be overtaken.”

CHAPTER IX.

Slow, from charm'd wonder, woke at last the King.

SIR E. B. LYTTON.

As soon as an appeal to Francis against the decision of Du Prat had been delivered at the Louvre, Bourbon, resolving to make immediate preparations for resistance, directed Esme Noel to await him outside the city, with a small party of retainers; and following alone, under cover of evening, passed unnoticed through the gates, and overtook them. Riding the whole night, they came next day to his palace of Moulins, in the Bourbonnois.

A horseman who rode in advance gave notice of their approach; and though arriving only a few minutes before them,

prepared everything for their reception. Five hundred gentlemen of the household, attired in dresses of the richest velvet, and each wearing a chain of gold round his neck, met them in the avenue ; and passing on, they found the vast hall lined with inferior retainers. Knights and men-at-arms mingled with the throng, presenting in their buff suits and coats of mail a stern contrast to the gorgeous costume of ushers and pages. The walls, wainscotted with polished oak, were adorned with banners and trophies, won on many a memorable field, and ranged side by side with portraits of the race of Bourbon, from the first Count of Paris to the last of Montpensier.

Idolized by his adherents, Bourbon was greeted on every side with acclamations, but he heard them with seeming indifference, though revealing no trace of the fierce and unruly passions at work in his mind.

He passed up the hall to his closet, giving the Chamberlain an especial charge concerning Esme, who was accordingly marshalled into a stately suite of apartments, where servants attended with refreshments. After reposing himself, he went over the palace, and examined with admiration its numerous rarities and treasures. Then he sauntered into the park, which covered several miles, embracing the most charming variations of dell and upland, richly wooded, adorned with numberless fountains, statues, and hermitages, and watered by the clear and tranquil Allier.

Seated at the foot of an oak, whose giant arms held a leafy canopy above, rustled gently by the breeze, while a thousand birds filled the air with harmony, Esme's eye roamed from point to point of the enchanting scene, alighting continually on new beauties. It was such a place as melancholy Jacques

would have loved ; and Esme was not insensible to its influence.

Memory involuntarily reverted to his last rencontre with Corinna, awaking the liveliest tenderness for her, mingled with resentment towards Francis. Yet reflection made him sensible of the extravagant folly he had committed, in fostering a passion so wild and chimerical, and which he was now unable to eradicate. In spite of better reason, his mind turned continually on its object, and by degrees, associated her with every hope and wish. Dazzled by beauty, he had been lured on by smiles, charmed by an engaging affability, infatuated by his own thoughts. Absence now broke the spell, but did not loosen his chain. Gloom and sadness took the place of joy ; imagination gave way to reality ; but his love was constant, rooted, and immovable.

The incident was one of those stern les-

sons of life, which are to be learned on its threshold, when the enthusiasm and self-reliance of youth receive their first check. Depressed a moment, the spirit springs up like a giant to renew its race, only to meet fresh reverses ; and discover the melancholy truth that merit and misfortune are often companions. Such was the conclusion forced upon Esme ; and rising, he returned to the palace a sadder and a wiser man.

Early on the following morning, he was summoned to attend Bourbon ; and from this moment was constantly in requisition, being engaged in confidential communications with the principal vassals of the Duchy, forwarding the secret levies, and collecting arms and munitions.

Meanwhile, Bourbon received the most encouraging reports from his adherents in Paris, and everything seemed to augur success. All at once, however, their letters

ceased, and the messengers he dispatched to them, never returned.

Amidst the alarm arising from these circumstances, he received a citation to appear before Francis, for the alleged purpose of having his appeal against Du Prat's judgment decided. For no consideration would he thus consent to place himself again in the King's power ; but suspecting a trap for his destruction, and being still unprepared for hostilities, he excused his non-attendance on the ground of illness. Rumours confirming this statement were industriously circulated ; and to give them an air of credibility, he secluded himself in his chamber, and only appeared abroad under cover of night.

A fortnight had elapsed, when, as Esme was returning from the Constable's castle of Chantelle, an incident occurred of a more significant character.

Day was drawing to a close as he entered

a wood, on the outskirts of the Bourbonnois ; and jaded with hard riding, halted in a little dell, sinking through wooded slopes to a brook. While his horse drank at will of the stream, he sat down on the bank, indulging a lover's musings, but which were soon interrupted by a dull, heavy sound, like the tramp of a large body of men ; and, springing up, he climbed the eminence to reconnoitre.

Screened from view by the thicket, he discerned, at a little distance, a strong brigade of men-at-arms, wheeling into an open space before him. The setting sun was reflected on a forest of glittering lances behind ; and a halt being sounded, the whole area became completely filled with troops.

A small party of horse drew up close by ; and Esme perceived, to his surprise, that they were headed by the King.

“Now, Admiral,” said Francis, “I will leave you to secure the roads ; and La Palise and Lautrec, must scour the country, so as to intercept Bourbon’s couriers. I will on to Moulins ; and, I think, we have so laid our toils, that the lion cannot escape us.”

“We shall find, Sire, that he has nothing of the lion, but the skin,” said Bonnivet.

“By my faith, you do him wrong,” cried Francis. “Be watchful, or he will even now slip the snare.”

Bonnivet’s reply was inaudible ; but Esme had heard enough to apprise him of Bourbon’s danger ; and recovering his horse, he made his way through brake and bush to an open glade, where he pushed forward at the utmost speed, determined to reach Moulins before the King.

CHAPTER X.

Thou hast prevaricated with thy friend,
By under-hand contrivances undone me ;
And while my open nature trusted in thee,
Thou hast stepp'd in between me and my hopes,
And ravish'd from me all my soul held dear.
Thou hast betray'd me !

ROWE.

THE Duchess d'Augoulême's suspicion that the sentiments of Francis towards Bourbon had latterly been influenced by his sister, Marguerite, was not without ground. That Princess had undertaken, in the eleventh hour, the task so often fulfilled by Queen Claude, and laboured diligently to reconcile him to his injured subject.

The time she selected for her mediation

was most opportune. Bourbon's secret departure from Paris had filled the public mind with gloomy forebodings ; the people manifested their sympathy for him in the most open and unequivocal manner ; and at every point the monarch saw danger and alarm. Week after week passed by, and the ferment, instead of abating, increased, while the Constable's protracted stay at Moulins, and evasion of the royal citation, continually gave rise to renewed apprehensions.

Such was the state of affairs when the Emperor, Charles the Fifth, received an intimation that his league with Bourbon had been discovered ; and, misled by this false intelligence, poured an army into Savoy, then occupied by the French, hoping still to take Francis by surprise. England also assumed a menacing attitude ; and began to muster an armament at Portsmouth, under

the Duke of Suffolk, as an evidence that her hostility would not be confined to threats.

Francis was not deficient in great qualities ; and though, for many years of his long reign, love of ease and abandonment to pleasure, kept them out of view, they were brought into play by the exigencies of the passing crisis. He took instant measures for the defence of the kingdom, and relief of Savoy ; and by means of forced loans, recruited his exhausted exchequer. Preparations were made for war with extraordinary diligence and secrecy ; and, all being completed, his first care was to secure himself from domestic commotions. Bourbon's messengers to the metropolis were intercepted ; the persons most zealous in his interest thrown into prison ; the frontiers so vigilantly guarded, that he could receive no communications from abroad ; and the army destined for Savoy, headed by Francis him-

self, was advanced by rapid marches on Moulins.

But, while adopting these precautions, Francis was not slow to remember that, in such times of peril, Bourbon's arm had hitherto been his staff of support—his name the watchword of victory ; and the recollection of memorable services, aided by the persuasions of Marguerite, deadened for the moment that jealousy of the Constable's renown, which had first provoked his dislike. He had made him feel his power ; and both policy and inclination now moved him to clemency. At the same time, he resolved to take signal vengeance on St. Vallier, whom Louise and Bonnivet had represented as Bourbon's most active adherent, and, previously to leaving the capital, he issued orders for his immediate trial, directing that no effort should be spared to secure his condemnation.

In passing up the avenue of Moulins to

the palace, he saw nothing to intimate that the surprise designed to attend his visit would not have effect. The guard at the vestibule, it is true, turned out at his approach; but this was a courtesy always rendered to strangers of distinction; and only the usual attendants were collected at the door. He alighted, therefore, in the full persuasion that Bourbon was unprepared for his arrival.

As his foot touched the ground, the report of a cannon boomed overhead. Instantly, as if by magic, the court before the palace was thronged with armed men; officers and pages came in troops to the door; and attendants in sumptuous liveries, crowded the hall. Yet, in this astonishing display, there was nowhere visible the slightest trace of confusion, but every one fell at once into his appointed place, an evidence of the military precision, as well as

the power of his lord. Francis could not repress an exclamation of amazement, and for the first time hesitated.

“Sire, you have ventured too far,” whispered the Seigneur de Warty, who was one of his train. “You have placed yourself in your enemy’s hands.”

“It is too late to repent of it,” answered Francis.

He turned to Bourbon’s Chamberlain, who at this moment appeared, and inquired for his master.

“My lord would be here, Sire, to offer you his duty,” replied the Chamberlain; “but is unhappily prevented by sickness, and sends me to attend you.”

“It would have pleased me better to see himself,” replied Francis; “but lead me to his chamber.”

Bending deferentially, the Chamberlain conducted him to Bourbon’s presence.

The windows, screened by curtains, admitted but a dim light, showing the Constable stretched on a bed of state, and wearing every appearance of the illness he feigned. Confinement, indeed, had blanched his cheek ; anxiety and constant application given a haggard look to his once cheerful countenance ; and his frame had suffered from neglect. Still his eye retained its haughty glance, and in spite of the imposition he was practising, turned with defiance on Francis.

“You give me but poor welcome, kinsman,” cried the King ; “but I am not the less sorry to find you in this straight.”

“Ah! sire,” replied Bourbon, “those gracious words cannot restore me health, though it was your lips took it from me. What welcome can I offer, when I know not but your presence here is to turn me houseless on the world ?”

“Perish such a thought!” exclaimed Francis. “It does me foul injustice.”

“Is it not warranted by what has passed? Conscience will tell you, sire, that I have no great cause to expect any other result.”

“You speak in anger, cousin. It is true, I have been hasty with you, but, surely, all the fault is not mine. There have been doings on your side also, more than needs be told. But I have not come here to recriminate. Only say, when you appealed against the Chancellor’s decree, why did you not wait patiently for my decision?”

“I have already told you, my liege; and did not lack other reasons, if you wish to know them. Your highness no longer looked on me with favour, and my adversary was your mother. Could a disgraced and fallen man wait for generosity, when denied justice?”

“Better do that than foment rebellion, and arm your vassals against your King.”

“Self-preservation owns no laws, sire. I do confess that I have been taking such measures as you hint at, but only to defend my own territories.”

“Whatever your motive, to levy arms against my authority is treason; and, as such, must be punished.”

“Say you?” cried Bourbon, half springing from the bed.

“Yes, kinsman. And your punishment shall be, that I, your King, against whom you would have rebelled, here and now restore all your possessions, give you back your titles, revenues, and pensions; and pronounce the verdict of the Table of Marble null and void.”

“My lord, and King!” cried Bourbon.

“Are we friends?” asked Francis.

“Am I not your subject, sire?” said Bourbon, evasively.

“Then you will accompany me into Italy?”

“I fear it will be long, before I am equal to such a journey. For what purpose do you go thither?”

“Do you not know, then, that the Emperor has violated the treaty of peace, and overrun Savoy?”

“By my honour, no!” exclaimed Bourbon, surprised and enraged at the Emperor’s precipitation. “Would that I could sit my horse, and he should soon see me in the field.”

“If you would really do me a service, cousin, let the world see that we are reconciled. Come with me to the army, though it be in a litter.”

For a moment Bourbon hesitated—touched by the King’s earnestness, and yielding to the natural generosity of his disposition. But recollecting his wrongs—reflecting how deeply he had compromised himself with

the Emperor and his friends, and remembering the uncertainty and fickleness of the King's character, his determination returned. "Alas, sire! at present it is impossible," he replied. "A few days may recruit my strength, and I will then, if it please you, move by easy stages towards the frontier."

"Be it so, if it cannot be helped," returned Francis, biting his lip. "I shall leave a trusty officer here, to attend you on the way, and will await your coming at Lyons. Now, farewell!"

He extended his hand, which Bourbon would have pressed to his lips, but suddenly stepping forward, Francis embraced him.

"Remember!" he then said; and quitted the room.

"Yes, yes, I will remember!" cried Bourbon, starting up, "And when we next meet, false King! you, too, shall have a fresher

memory. I shall not need to tell you what are my grievances."

"The present is the moment for action," said the Bishop of Autun, stepping from behind a screen. "When the bird flies in, the fowler closes his net."

"David did not thus with Saul," answered Bourbon. "No! he has ventured himself within my doors, and here I must be his protector. But where is my esquire? Without, there!"

Esme, whom he had ordered to be in waiting, immediately appeared.

"This place cannot be defended, if we should be attacked," Bourbon then said: "so spur back to Chantelle, and see that it is put at once into a good posture. I will follow to-night, if this spy, whom the king has left behind, can be over-reached."

Replying with a bow, Esme set forth on his errand.

CHAPTER XI.

Slave, do thine office !

Strike as I struck the foe ! Strike as I would
Have struck those tyrants ! Strike deep as my curse !
Strike—and but once !

DOGE OF VENICE.

THE Court of the Marble Table was again in session. Now, however, it sat with closed doors ; and the great hall, before filled with jewelled dames and gay courtiers, contained only the grave and stern-looking judges, their sombre attendants, and a prisoner.

The last was a tall, slight man, of venerable appearance, and bearing on his forehead the broad impress of a noble and elevated character. His face was pale, but composed ; his lips were compressed ; and

he listened with profound attention to the oration of the Procureur de Roi, setting forth the crime of which he was accused. The arraignment concluded, he was addressed by Du Prat.

“Count de St. Vallier,” said the unprincipled Chancellor, “you have heard what weighty matters are alleged against you—especially the conspiring with Charles, late Duke de Bourbon, to levy war on the King’s grace, and holding treasonable correspondence with his perfidious enemy, the Emperor of Germany; and now I entreat you, for conscience’ sake, as these things are incontestably true, that you will humbly on your knees acknowledge the same, asking pardon of God and man, that so our Lord the King may be moved, in compassion, to spare your miserable body the mutilation enjoined by the law, when your life is rendered up on the block.”

“My Lord,” was the firm answer of St. Vallier, “if you can prove me guilty of these heavy charges, I shall have no claim to the King’s clemency. But before I am sentenced, I must be convicted, and justice will require the clearest evidence. Call your witnesses, then ; and let me hear their testimony.”

“Clerk, read the depositions,” cried Du Prat.

“Nay, nay, my Lord,” exclaimed St. Vallier, “I ask for your witnesses, not for a record, whether true or false, of what they have said. I am not to be condemned by hearsay, but tried fairly, legally, and openly. Confront me with my accusers, and I have no fear but I shall prove my innocence.”

“The evidence against you is conclusive, and indisputable,” remarked the Procureur de Roi, “and admits of no question. It is attested by two of your associates,

the Seneschal Matignon, and the Seigneur D'Argouges——”

“False traitors, both !” said St. Vallier.

“Thou art thyself the traitor,” interposed Du Prat, with a furious gesture, “and one deserving to die by the cord, rather than by the headsman.”

“And thou art an upright judge, Sir Chancellor,” answered St. Vallier, calmly.

“These noble gentlemen,” pursued the Procureur, resuming his narrative, “each respectively testify that you and others did, in their presence, at a meeting held clandestinely at a certain auberge, in the Ville de Paris, plan, arrange, and order a general revolt of the Commons : that on another occasion—to wit, the day following, you attended a second secret meeting, held at Montmartre, where you met delegates from the various quarters of the city, and addressed them on the part, and in the name

of Charles, late Duke de Bourbon, then and there reading a treasonable proclamation from that traitorous and outlawed felon. The said proclamation is now in court."

"Can you disprove these things?" cried Du Prat. "Say, Sir, have we enough treason here for your strong digestion, or shall we look for more?"

"More remains, if it be needed," observed the Procureur.

"You have yet to make it appear that what is adduced against me amounts to treason," returned St. Vallier. "I confess to having attended the meetings—to reading the manifesto; but deny that we meditated evil against the King. Our design was, first, to assist the Duke de Bourbon in the maintenance of his rights, and, secondly, to pray the King's highness to extend the privileges of the Commons. My crime can be pushed no further."

“It goes far enough to carry you to the scaffold,” cried Du Prat. “We ask no evidence but your own admissions, and these would condemn you twice over. What is your judgment, my lords?—is the prisoner guilty, or not guilty?”

St. Vallier turned an earnest glance on the bench, but saw there no trace of the divine lustre of justice, and he beheld only servile and unscrupulous courtiers, who had mounted the bench of judgment by barter, and converted it into an engine of tyranny and corruption.

“GUILTY,” said the Judges, with one voice.

“You hear the verdict, prisoner,” said Du Prat; “and the sentence of the Court is, that you be removed to the place from which you came, and that, in three days from this time, you be taken thence to the scaffold, where your head shall be severed

from your body—your body disembowelled, and cut into four quarters, and a quarter hung up over each barrier of the city. This is your sentence, and now the trial is finished.”

He arose ; and seeing that it would be useless, St. Vallier made no reply, but suffered himself to be removed from the dock.

Immured in the Prison de l'Abbaye, in a narrow and low-roofed chamber, grated and barred, and precluded from all intercourse with his friends and the world, the Count did not waste in fruitless repining the few short hours of existence which the iron hand of tyranny had doled out to him. Anticipating condemnation, he had previously put his affairs in proper order ; and nothing now remained but to prepare for that valley of the shadow of death, already visible to his mind's eye, and soon to become a reality.

The fond father, snatched from his loved and loving child—the high-minded patrician, contemplating the dishonour of his name—the proud and sensitive soldier, awaiting the ignominy of a public execution, he could not but feel acutely all the painful and humiliating circumstances of his miserable fate. His youth of golden promise, his manhood of honourable fame, his revered and tranquil age, on which none could ever cast reproach, were to come to this opprobrious end! All the great events of his career crowded into minutes, recalling to memory their long-forgotten hopes, fears, and associations. He saw again, in imagination, his early companions, his martial comrades, his later and more select friends. He thought of his first love, his young and cherished bride, and the sacred pledge of their affection, purchased too dearly with its mother's life. Now that his hours—

his very moments were numbered, how cheerfully could he have met death, restoring him to the fellowship of that dear and lamented being—had it not been the death of shame!

But these reflections, though continually obtruding, could not divert him from the solemn offices of religion, or the severe self-scrutiny dictated by his situation. He did not attempt to move the clemency of the King, being too surely informed that the Camarilla around him had vowed his destruction, and that no plea he could urge would prevail against them. Nor would he suffer his daughter, the beautiful Diane, afterwards the far-famed Duchess of Valentinois, to share his prison, deferring till the latest moment the sad duty of consoling her, ere he bade her an eternal adieu.

The last night had arrived; but it brought him no terrors, no vain regrets, no dread of

the morrow. He felt, in the language of the great contemporary of every age and man, how dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable are all the uses of this world ; he seemed to experience already the divine serenity of the future, awaiting his entry within its portals ; and how could he even fear the reproach of a shameful end, when contemplating the sufferings of his Saviour, whose blood blotted out his transgressions.

The good Christian, of whatever persuasion, in those last awful moments, is never left comfortless ; and a small, still voice within soothes, strengthens, and inspires him. As a Catholic, St. Vallier was unacquainted with the sublime consolations of the Scriptures, but in receiving the final rites of the Church, a spirit akin to them filled his heart, making him confident in that wondrous and abiding love for his creatures, declared by the Prophet from God himself,—

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea; she may forget; yet will I not forget thee!” Such was the assurance which that night sealed his eyes in a calm and refreshing sleep.

Morning dawned brightly, and gradually spread forth its most dazzling effulgence, as if to smile on a bridal rather than a scaffold. But as St. Vallier arose, and knelt in prayer before a crucifix, a more shining light beamed in his bosom—that of a good man’s soul, rising to meet its Maker.

Suddenly the door opened; there was a cry of agony; and Diane, bathed in tears, and with her long hair falling dishevelled over her bosom, threw herself into his arms. Both father and child were silent.

“My Diane!” exclaimed St. Vallier, at length, “be comforted. We part, but it is not for ever. Something assures me we

shall meet again, as well as your long-lost mother, where man shall have no power to separate us."

"Oh! where can we fly from the tyranny of man?—cruel, cruel man!" sobbed Diane, clinging closer to his bosom.

"To God," said St. Vallier, solemnly.

"I have prayed, and God has not heard me," said Diane—"no! though every word was choked with my tears. My father—my dear, dear father is to die—to be murdered!"

"It is His wise providence, and, the good Père tells us, a seeming calamity often veils a mercy. Let us not murmur, then, my child. Heaven has granted me a long life of prosperity, honour, and happiness; and though it ends like a criminal's, you will not have to blush for my name. Low as my head will fall, it will not fall unhonoured."

"My father! my father! Oh! must I, then, be torn from you?"

“Dear child, this is my only sorrow. I bleed more at your tears, than I shall beneath the headsman’s axe.”

“Oh! is it I who wound you? I who embitter your last sad hours? Selfish that I am! but up to this moment, I have hoped to avert my fate—hoped to save you, dear father!”

“How could you so deceive yourself? But you knew not my enemies were so powerful, and so relentless.”

“Oh, yes! for I besought their mercy as I would God’s, on my knees, and with tears; but in vain. It was my mistress that I relied on. She promised me that you should not die.”

“Dear, noble lady, she would have saved me if she could,” cried St. Vallier; “and the thought that I leave you in the care of the good Duchess of Alençon is my dearest consolation. Now, take courage, dear Diane.

That bell announces the sad moment has come. Let us part."

As he spoke, his chaplain appeared, followed by the officers of the law; but the unhappy Diane was unconscious of their presence. Nature had given way before the terrible shock; and drooping on her father's bosom, she swooned.

St. Vallier turned one glance on her pale face, kissed her wet and death-like cheeks, pressed her once more to his heart; and then, with a repressed groan, placed her in the arms of her attendant, who had entered with the others. He seemed shaken, but it was only for a moment, and he immediately assumed the same calm look he had worn before.

Firm and erect, he took his place in the procession which was to escort him to the scaffold. With measured pace it moved through the vaulted passages of the prison,

reached the massive and frowning gates, and poured into the street.

Only for the great bell of St. Germain des Près, which tolled forth at intervals a sonorous knell, the city would have been as still as at midnight. Columns of troops lined the way, as a precaution against rescue, but it seemed unnecessary ; for the shops and marts were all shut, and the streets deserted, save by a few straggling citizens, though crowds of sad faces appeared on the house-tops, and at every window.

But the scene changed in the Place de Grève, where, reckless of personal danger, a concourse had assembled round the fatal platform. Their voices hushed as the procession was seen to approach ; and when St. Vallier mounted the scaffold, every head was uncovered. Then he felt that the shame and opprobrium of his death rested, not on himself, but on his destroyers.

He knelt down and joined the priest in prayer, all around repeating the responses. Rising, he was accosted by Rouge-Croix.

“Seigneur, a sad task is imposed upon me,” said the herald. “I am to demand from you the collar of Saint-Esprit.”

“It was a reward for good service, but take it,” said St. Vallier, removing the decoration from his neck.

“I have now to take from you the spurs of knighthood, Seigneur.”

St. Vallier changed colour. “They were said to have been gallantly won,” he remarked; “and I would fain have died with them on.”

“It cannot be, Seigneur, or I would not have required them from you.”

“Let them go, then,” said the Count.

The spurs were removed; and he took leave of the priest, and the principal func-

tionaries around, when the executioner knelt and asked his forgiveness.

These proceedings were watched by the spectators with the most painful, but intense interest ; and as St. Vallier approached the block, a murmur of sorrow broke from all. It went to the good man's heart ; and, raising his cap, he looked around, and bent his silvered head in gratitude.

“ Farewell, my friends,” he said. “ May God bless you.”

Again his head was bent, but it was to lay it on the block. The stillness of death pervaded the square. Not a breath seemed drawn—not a heart was unmoved—not an eye free from tears,—but one : St. Vallier's own !

There was a low buzz, then a cry, then a cheer, and the word spread, and rose, and rang through the Place, uttered by every voice, bursting from every heart, in one loud,

long, thrilling shout, "REPRIEVE! REPRIEVE! he is saved!"

As the sea opened before the rod of Moses, when the flying Hebrews passed dry shod through its waters, so the multitude fell back ; and a horseman appeared, holding aloft a scroll, which he waved overhead. On he came through the crowd, his steed flaked with foam, till, drawing nearer, he exclaimed, in hurried tones, "Ho, there ! in the King's name !"

The scroll was handed to the Intendant, who eagerly tore it open.

"It is true, Seigneur," he said to St. Vallier, who had stepped up to him. "Your sentence is commuted to imprisonment for life."

"Be it so," replied St. Vallier, bending his head.

Marguerite of Valois had kept her word : he was not to die !

CHAPTER XII.

The Tartar lighted at the gate,
But scarce upheld his fainting weight ;
His swarthy visage spake distress,
But this might be from weariness ;
His garb with sanguine spots was dyed,
But this might be from his courser's side.

THE GIAOUR.

DE WARTY, the officer left behind by Francis, had really, as conjectured, been imposed on Bourbon more as a spy than a guide ; and one better qualified for the task could not have been selected. Having posted his attendants in such a manner as to command the various outlets of the palace, he moved from room to room, with a scrutinising eye, observing whatever passed,

addressing, now and then, a word to the domestics, and letting all understand that the surrounding country was occupied by Francis, and every road guarded.

Night had set in, when he was attracted by an unusual stir in the hall. Attendants hurried to and fro ; and officers and pages collected in knots, exchanging anxious whispers, to which the appearance of Bourbon's physician, hastening past, gave peculiar significance. While De Warty was wondering what had happened, he was surprised to hear his own name pronounced, and found himself confronted by the Chamberlain.

"Is it possible to overtake the King, Sir?" the Chamberlain asked.

"My lord has had a sudden relapse ; and, before he dies, would fain see his highness."

"Is his death so near?" inquired De Warty, in amazement.

"All hope is gone," exclaimed the Chamberlain. "But if you hasten after the King, he may arrive in time to take leave of him."

"I am commanded not to leave the palace, unless in his lordship's company," answered De Warty, with sudden suspicion.

"Then, my lord will be denied his last wish," said the Chamberlain; "for, I suppose, our messenger will meet so many obstacles on the road, that he will not reach his highness till it is too late."

"That may be remedied. Bring him to me, and he shall be furnished with a pass."

Writing materials were produced, and the important document prepared, while the Chamberlain proceeded in search of the messenger. When he appeared, De Warty beheld a tall, athletic man, having a black patch over his brow, and his face buried in a profusion of beard and whiskers; but ad-

vancing to survey him more closely, the adjacent flambeau, sconced in the wall behind, suddenly went out, leaving an imperfect light, though it seemed sufficient to satisfy his scruples.

“You will find his highness at Lyons if you ride fast,” he said. “This paper will pass you through all the videttes.”

The man made a gruff reply, and mounting a charger which waited at the porch, rode off.

The night was cold and cheerless; the dark expanse above was unbroken by a single star; and the wind swept in gusts round the palace, like the moanings of a troubled spirit. Regardless of these things, the horseman dashed across the court, covered the long avenue beyond, and gained the road.

Here he seemed to increase his speed, and the horse's feet barely touched the ground.

Tall trees, peering through the darkness, flew past like phantoms ; and objects were no sooner seen, than they were left behind.

Now he mounted a steep hill, and then cleared a valley ; now skirted a champagne, or bleak moor, and, again, pushed through a sleeping village. On, on ! never once checking the rein, never once looking round.

A grey light appeared in the east, spreading by imperceptible degrees further and further, till gradually, the full radiance of morning shone forth.

Bourbon—for the horseman was no other, —was now entering on a vast plain, where he could just distinguish the lofty donjon of Chantelle ; but when the haven was thus near, his horse dropped from exhaustion. After vainly attempting to raise it, he left the gallant animal on the road, and plunged into a thicket, resolving, as the immediate neighbourhood of the castle would be more

strictly guarded than the open country, to remain there till nightfall, and then resume his way on foot.

Some time had elapsed, when he was aroused by shouts, and climbing a tree, discovered a troop of cavalry encompassing the wood, and a soldier leading a horse, apparently from its limping gait, his own, and which, having been discovered close by, had doubtless pointed out his retreat. Seeing that it would be impossible to pass forth, he remained in the tree, although, as the foliage was very scanty, there was little hope of escaping observation ; and it was clear that the thicket was undergoing a thorough search.

At this juncture, another squadron of horse was discerned coming from the direction of Chantelle ; and Bourbon perceived that they were led by Esme, who, alarmed that he did not arrive, according to his ap-

pointment, had sallied out to reconnoitre. Descending from the tree, Bourbon was threading his way towards him, when a voice called to him to stop, and an arrow whizzed past ; but receiving no hurt, he hurried on, and reached the road. Loud acclamations greeted him, and he found himself in the midst of a chosen troop of retainers, ready to die in his defence.

As he mounted a fresh charger, De Warty rode up.

“My lord, this is not honourable,” he cried angrily. “You lead me to suppose that you are dying, and then steal privily away. Such a deception is unworthy of you.”

“The part you play is more degrading, Seigneur,” answered Bourbon, contemptuously. “War and policy justify stratagem, but a spy is always despicable. Moreover, it is a new thing for me to account for my

actions, and when called upon for such a reckoning, I can only answer with this——” And he touched his sword.

“I understand you, my lord. It is needless to reply to your insinuation ; but you are no doubt aware that I am ordered by the King to attend you.”

“Do not give yourself this trouble any longer. I release you from it.”

“My orders are imperative—to conduct your lordship to his highness’s presence.”

“What if I refuse to accompany you ?”

“Then a painful duty will devolve upon me ; and I shall be compelled to attach your person.”

“With your present force, that will be difficult ; and if we come to blows, you are, methinks, more likely yourself to be made prisoner than I am.”

“Your lordship does not mean to resist the King’s commands ?”

“To the death ! Go tell him so : and if he needs further explanation, let him seek me yonder.”

So saying, he turned away, without heeding the remonstrances of De Warty ; and led his followers to Chantelle. Here he was received on the drawbridge by the Seneschal and Wardens, who conducted him into the castle.

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